Al-Mīzān

An Exegesis of the Qur'an

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī

Translated by: Amina Inloes

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In the Name of Allah,
the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds;
the Beneficent, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgment;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we beseech
for help;
Guide us in the straight path;
The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed
favors,not of those against whom Thou art
wrathful, nor of those who are astray.

O' Allah! send Your blessings to the head of
Your messengers and the last of
Your prophets,
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send Your blessings to all Your
prophets and envoys.

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Arabic Transliteration Key

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Arabic Letters	Transliteration
ا	ā	ع	ʿ
ب	b	غ	gh
ت	t	ف	f
ث	th	ق	q
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	ه	h
ر	r	و	w/ū
ز	z	ى	y/ī
س	s	ء	ʾ
ش	sh	ة	-
ص	ṣ	ـَ	a
ض	ḍ	ـَ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُ	u
ظ	ẓ		

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Publisher's Note

In an effort to make the text more accessible to English-speaking readers, the editors have chosen to use English names for the prophets and figures (as listed below but not limited to) and to use Anglicized terms that now appear in English dictionaries.

Ādam	Adam	Mūsā	Moses
Dāwūd	David	Sulaymān	Solomon
Hārūn	Aaron	Shuʿayb	Jethro
Ibrāhīm	Abraham	Yaʿqūb	Jacob
ʿĪsā	Jesus	ʾAyyūb	Job
Isḥāq	Isaac	Yūshaʿ	Joshua
Ismāʿīl	Ishmael	Yūsuf	Joseph
Jibrāʾīl	Gabriel	Zakariyyā	Zachariah
Maryam	Mary	ʿUzayr	Ezra

Arabic terms and names have been transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*).

For ease of reading, glyphs and traditional honorifics such as "peace be upon him" or (s.a.w.) which are commonly used as a gesture of respect after the name of the Prophet Muhammad, the Imāms, or other sacred figures have been omitted from this text. No disrespect is intended, and may God's peace and blessings be upon them all!

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Foreword

Today's world is not ᶜAllāmah's. Much has changed, including attitudes towards the battlefield. The Battle of Badr was glorious, a triumph of faith over godlessness, a metaphysical rivalry enacted on two opposing sides of a barren valley. Many of ᶜAllāmah's contemporaries wrote of the virtues of martyrdom, and some—like Ayatollah Muṭahhari—became martyrs themselves.

Today, many Muslims shy away from discussing the battles of early Islam. In part, this is due to the vicious stereotyping of Muslims as violent, as well as the desire to refute the trope that Islam "spread by the sword". While Muslim children still learn about the Battle of Badr, there is often a cognitive dissonance between how early Islamic history is taught—including the battles—and discomfort with this aspect of the Prophet's early community. Martyrdom, as an Islamic value, is discussed in hushed tones; as Jalāl Āl-e Aḥmad lamented, "We have forgotten the tradition of martyrdom and have changed into those who are only guarding at the cemeteries of martyrs."[1]

The chapter under discussion here, Sūrah al-Anfāl, tells the Muslims to incline towards peace wherever possible, it acknowledges the inevitable reality of war and the need for defence. Muslims must not be doormats. As ᶜAllāmah notes in his philosophical musings on this chapter, people and societies will always disagree or have opposing interests, and so it is only a matter of time before one will attempt to attack, plunder, or assimilate the other. Thus, the human animal—like other animals—is born with faculties that serve no purpose but to fight back.

In fact, Sūrah al-Anfāl, is largely about battle. The name itself, *anfāl*, refers here primarily to the spoils of war, although it also figures into discussions of the *khums* tax. Much of the chapter is specifically about the Battle of Badr, to the degree that Ibn ᶜAbbās, the famous companion-exegete,

1 Cited in Ali Shariati, *Martyrdom, Arise and Bear Witness*, trans. A. A. Ghassemy (n.l.: Ministry of Islamic Guidance, 1981), ch. 4.

is said to have spoken of it as "Sūrah al-Badr." As usual in the Qur'anic text, Sūrah al-Anfāl provides a supra-human perspective on the Battle of Badr. Rather than providing a beginning-to-end narrative, it highlights key events that have a moral component, and the role of the metaphysical and the unseen: faith and unfaith, the miraculous, and the divine hand. A more human sort of account—people, places, dates, and names—emerges in the exegesis, which draws heavily upon narrative and historical reports. Thus, it is in the exegesis that the Battle of Badr is outlined with the sort of detail that humans demand from a story. It is in the exegesis that we learn who did what, who said what, and who composed which poetry. Participants range from the Prophet, to his tiny band of followers, to his well-known enemies like Abū Jahl, to lesser-known folk whose names require digging to determine the correct vowelling of. Then there are the Muslim converts in Mecca forced to fight against the Prophet, the angels, and Iblīs. Quite a crowd! Should one wish to learn more about the Battle of Badr, ʿAllamāh's exegesis of this chapter is an excellent starting place—especially since, as usual, ʿAllāmah integrates both Sunni and Shiʿi narrations and viewpoints into his discussion.

This chapter also lays down some rules for war. For instance, verse 8:65 tells the Muslims that they cannot flee battle unless they are outnumbered more than one-to-ten, whereas verse 8:66 says that they cannot flee battle unless they are outnumbered more than one-to-two. Why the difference? ʿAllāmah explains it as such: because the early Muslims—including luminaries such as Imām ʿAlī—were spiritually stronger, they could vanquish more enemies in the earthly realm. But as Islam spread, the spiritual strength of the common man became diluted. One average man no longer equalled ten men in his patience and faith; he only equalled two. This is food for thought, not only about warfare. Other rules involve treaties, prisoners, and—as the title indicates—the spoils of war. Since—despite polemical insinuations to the contrary—Muslims did not invent warfare, and there was a thriving custom of battle in the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula, the exegetical explanations here help to contextualize how the early Muslims and others would have understood these verses.

However, this is not only a volume of history. While much of the exegesis is, actually, about history, ʿAllāmah also speaks to the concerns

of his time. As someone who lived during the fall of the last Muslim empire, ʿAllāmah shared a concern over the political and cultural vulnerability of the Muslim world, and the need for Muslims to formulate an indigenous theory of Islamic governance. While his reflections on this topic are often more subdued and philosophical than those of his peers, he nonetheless deduces present-day ideals for Islamic governance from these verses. Another concern of many twentieth-century Muslim thinkers was the importance of transnational Muslim brotherhood, and the topic of brotherhood also emerges here: towards the end, in reference to the pact of brotherhood that the Prophet made between the Migrants and the Helpers, who initially inherited from each other. (Alas that the spirit of brotherhood seems to be waning in a flurry of ethnic, ideological, and sectarian splintering, but perhaps the narrations on the pact will prove inspiring in that regard.)

Still, even history itself can be a present-day controversy. One difference between the early twentieth century, and today, is that Muslims have challenged the validity of some historical narrations. One example of this that comes up here are the narrations about the victory over the Banū Qurayẓah. In any case, the reader should be aware that when ʿAllāmah quotes narrations, he does not intend to endorse the validity of every single one; indeed, he often comments for or against them. All that can be said is that narrations regarding the Banū Qurayẓah exist, and have been mentioned here; the reader can do with that what they will.

Last but not least, it is necessary to thank the many people who assisted with this translation, including but not limited to the ever-patient and erudite M.S. Bahmanpour, who has been deeply tolerant of my ruminations over vowelling, as well as the ever-patient and ever-encouraging Ali Khalfan. In the past few years, especially due to challenging circumstances, some of us have migrated from place to place, yet this transnational exegetical brotherhood has persisted.

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16 August 2022

Chapter 8

Sūrah al-Anfāl

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Verses 1 to 6

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate

From the content of these verses, it can be understood that this chapter was revealed in Medina after the Battle of Badr, insofar as it speaks of some of what happened at Badr. Additionally, it discusses various matters pertaining to jihad, the spoils of war (*ghanāʾim* and *anfāl*), and related matters, as well as some things pertaining to the migration to Medina (*hijrah*). On that note, the chapter ends.

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يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَنْفَالِ ۖ قُلِ الْأَنْفَالُ لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ ۖ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَصْلِحُوا
ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ ۖ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١﴾

(8:1) ***They ask you about the spoils of war* (al-anfāl).** ***Say: The spoils of war belong to Allah and the Messenger. Mind Allah and rectify what is between yourselves* (dhāta baynikum)*, and obey Allah and His messenger—if you be believers.***

Anfāl is the plural of *nafal*, and means "an excess or abundance of something". For that reason, *nafal* and *nāfilah* came to be used for performing extra acts of worship, whereas *anfāl* came to be used for *fayʾ*, which are properties with no owner, such as mountaintops, canyon-clefts, abandoned houses, ghost towns whose former inhabitants left no heirs, and other such things which go over and above what people own. No one owns them; therefore, they are the property of God and His messenger. *Anfāl* is also used for the spoils of war (*ghanāʾim*), since they are in excess of the objective which was sought in the war, for the goal of a battle is vanquishing and eradicating the enemy. If the enemy is vanquished and

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one is victorious, the aim has been met; spoils or captives are in excess of this original aim.

Dhāt was originally the feminine form of *dhā*, meaning "possessor of". Although, technically, an object must be appended to it, in practice, it fell into common usage as a standalone word to refer to the essence of someone or something; for instance, *dhāt al-insān* is used to speak of what makes a person a person, or *dhāt Zayd* speaks of that intrinsic Zayd-ness that makes Zayd into Zayd. Originally, it was used as part of a compound phrase in the context of a person possessing certain deeds; then, it simply became *dhāt*.

Dhāt al-bayn refers to a poor relationship between two parties (as estrangement must always involve two parties). Thus, the command in this verse to rectify what is *dhāt al-bayn* is telling them to patch things up and end the bad blood between themselves.

Al-Rāghib says in *al-Mufradāt*:

> *Dhū* is used two ways. One occurs when it is followed by a descriptor—an adjective, type, or category, which is appended to it; this descriptor must be specified directly rather than via a pronoun. It also takes a dual and plural form. The dual form is *dhawātā* and the plural is *dhawāt*. It must have an object appended to it.

However, lexicographers began to use it metaphorically to refer to the essence of a thing itself, whether it be an intrinsic or accidental characteristic. They used it alone or with a pronoun; they also prefixed it with the definite article *al-*. Thus it gained parlance to mean the essence or self of something, and the expression *dhātuhu wa nafsuhu wa khāṣṣatuhu* ("his essence, self, and specific characteristics") came into common usage, although it was not originally used by Arabs.

Secondarily, in the dialect of the Ṭayʾ tribe,[1] it was used to mean "who" or "what".[2] The word *dhū* was used regardless of whether it was in the nominative, accusative, or genitive cases, and whether it was in the singular, dual, or plural form. For example: "My well which (*dhū*) I dug

1 An Arab tribe said to have originally been from Yemen but which had migrated to north Arabia and beyond before the advent of the Prophet. [Trans.]

2 That is, in place of the word *alladhī* or *allatī*. [Trans.]

and which (*dhū*) I bolstered and built around [with rocks]."[1]

Al-Rāghib takes what he says about *dhū* not being used with a pronoun from al-Farrāʾ;[2] peoples of mixed heritage[3] were the ones who used *dhū* with a pronoun. However, the truth of the matter is that it was uncommon but not unheard of for the Arabs to use *dhū* with a pronoun; for instance, it is used with a pronoun by Imam ʿAlī in some of the sermons in *Nahj al-Balāghah*.

Exegetes vary widely in their understandings of what this verse mean. There are many points of disagreement. For instance, they disagree over what is meant by *they ask you about the spoils of war*, especially since in narrations from the family of the Prophet, as well as some others, like ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd, Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, and Ṭalḥah ibn Maṣraf, this verse is recited as *yasʾalūnaka al-anfāl* ("they ask you for the spoils of war", rather than *yasʾalūnaka ʿan al-anfāl,* or "they ask you about the spoils of war"). In that view, the word *ʿan* is superfluous in the famous reading. Others say that the word *ʿan* is implied in the less common reading.

Furthermore, some exegetes say that the *anfāl* are the spoils of war, in general. Others say that *anfāl* specifically refers to what was taken after the Battle of Badr; they argue for this on the grounds that *anfāl* is prefixed by the definite article *al-*, thereby denoting specific spoils of war. Another view is that *anfāl* refers to the *fayʾ* (properties acquired without fighting) which belonged to God, the Messenger, and the Imam. Some say that this verse was abrogated by the verse on *khums*;[4] others say that it was not. Exegetes have argued long over this; those who have an interest in it can consult the exegeses by al-Rāzī, al-Ālūsī, and others.

The most apt view, which can be deduced from the text itself, is that the verse tells of two parties who were disputing and thus asked the Prophet

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1 In this snippet of verse, *dhū* is used where *allatī* would otherwise be used. [Trans.]

2 Abū Zakariyyā al-Farrāʾ (d. 822), a famous Kufan scholar of the Arabic language with a strong knowledge of the language of the Bedouins, which was considered to be a purer form of Arabic. [Trans.]

3 That is, in places where Arabs had intermarried with others; for instance, among Berbers, or in Muslim Spain. [Trans.]

4 Qur'an 8:41. [Trans.]

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to intervene; these are the *they* who were asking about the spoils of war. The conjunction *fa-* towards the end of the verse—*Mind Allah (*fattaqū Allāh*) and rectify what is between yourselves*—indicates that they were arguing over the spoils of war, and that they had asked for the Prophet's judgment on the matter. That is, they asked for the Prophet's ruling on the spoils of war to put an end to their dispute.

As you can see, this interpretation supports the more common reading of the verse (*yasʾalūnakaʿan al-anfāl*, not *yasʾalūnaka al-anfāl*). This is because the expression *saʾalaʿan* means "to seek knowledge about something"—such as a ruling or information—whereas the verb *saʾala* with only a direct object means to ask for something. Between these two views, only the first fits the context of the whole verse.

Additionally, even though the word *anfāl* encompasses things beyond the spoils of war, such as *fayʾ*, here, it is used specifically for the spoils of war. However, it refers to spoils of war in general, not specifically the Battle of Badr. Even though they were disputing over the spoils of war which happened to come from the Battle of Badr, their dispute did not hinge on the fact that these spoils of war came specifically from the Battle of Badr; nothing in the verse indicates that. Rather, their concern was over spoils of war that were taken in battle against the enemies of the faith; this is clear.

However, just because the verse is specifically discussing spoils of war does not mean that the ruling in it cannot apply to other instances of *anfāl*. In fact, the ruling in the verse applies to anything considered *anfāl*, and conveys that all of the *anfāl* belong to God and the Messenger; none of the faithful have any share in them, whether the *anfāl* be *ghanīmah* or *fayʾ*.

Say: The spoils of war belong to Allah and the Messenger: From this, as well as God's exhortations and urging towards faith, it can be understood that God put an end to the animosity by legislating that the spoils of war belong to Himself and the Messenger, thereby removing them from their hands. It evokes the sense that their dispute broke out when one side claimed that the spoils of war, or some of the spoils of war, was theirs and that the others had no share. However, the other side denied that. Therefore, God ended the dispute by taking the property out of their hands and establishing that it belongs to Himself and the Messenger. He then advises them to desist from their quarrel.

As for the view that, according to consensus, soldiers own whatever spoils of war they take, it is best to consult books of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) rather than exegesis.

In short, their dispute implies that, previously, there had been some sort of agreement that they could lay claim to the spoils of war. However, this had been a general or ambiguous sort of agreement, with each side trying to work it to its own benefit, as the verse shows.

A further explanation: The relationship of the verses in the chapter and the presentation of the story of the Battle of Badr in it demonstrate that the chapter was revealed wholly about the Battle of Badr and what happened shortly afterward, to the degree that Ibn ʿAbbās is said to have called it as "Sūrah Badr". Rulings about the spoils of war (*ghanīmah*) are presented in five verses, located in three sections in the chapter, as it was arranged:

> *They ask you about the spoils of war. Say: The spoils of war belong to Allah and the Messenger.…* (8:1)

> *Know that whatever you gain, a fifth of it is for Allah and the Messenger and the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer—if you believe in Allah and what We revealed to Our servant on the day of sorting, the day when the two hosts met. And Allah has power over all things.* (8:41)

> *It is not for a prophet to take captives until he subdues the land. You desire the fleeting things of this world, while Allah desires the hereafter [for you], and Allah is mighty, wise. Were it not for an ordinance from Allah that had already gone forth, an awful doom would have befallen you because of what you took. Eat then of what you have acquired in war, lawful and good, and mind Allah; Allah is forgiving, merciful.* (8:67-69)

From the text of the verses, it can be understood that the second set of verses was revealed after the first and third sets, since the second set says *if you believe in Allah and what We revealed to Our servant on the day of sorting, the day when the two hosts met*; that is, these verses must have been revealed sometime after the Battle of Badr.

Furthermore, the third set of verses indicates that some people had

spoken to the Messenger of God about taking captives and had asked him to ransom the enemies rather than to kill them. These verses censure them for that, then permit them to make use of the spoils of war. It seems that, from that, they had the idea that they could take possession of the spoils of war (*ghanāʾim* and *anfāl*), although they were confused over matters such as whether or not everyone present at the battle had a right to the spoils of war, or only those who fought. And were the shares divided equally, or were there differences—for instance, did horsemen take more than foot-soldiers?

This was the root of their disagreement. They brought it to the Messenger of God, whereupon the verse was revealed: *Say: The spoils of war belong to Allah and the Messenger. Mind Allah and rectify what is between yourselves*. Their error was in assuming that they could take possession of the spoils of war through misunderstanding the verse [*eat of what you have taken…*]. This verse ratified the ruling that the spoils of war belonged to God and the Messenger, and forbade them from arguing with each other. After their quarrel had ceased, the Prophet returned the spoils of war to them by dividing the spoils of war among them equally. He put aside a share for some companions who had not been present at the battle and had not gone out to fight, and did not distinguish between horsemen and foot-soldiers. Then, after some time, this verse was revealed: *Know that whatever you gain, a fifth is for Allah…*. Then, the Prophet collected a fifth of what had been allotted to them, and they kept the rest. This is what can be deduced from reading the verses about the *anfāl* in harmony with each other.[1]

They ask you about the spoils of war* (al-anfāl)*: Taken in conjunction with the context, it can be understood that they asked the Prophet for a ruling on the spoils of war after they had asserted that they enjoyed ownership over it. However, they different over who had rights to it, or how it should be distributed, or both. Thus, they fell into dispute.

Say: The spoils of war belong to Allah and the Messenger: This replies to their question. It explains that they do not actually have the immediate right to possess it; rather, God and His Messenger have authority over

1 Rather than, say, seeing them as abrogating each other. [Trans.]

it, and that it will be distributed as God and His Messenger please. This severed the root of their disagreement.

This interpretation shows that this verse (8:1) did not abrogate [*eat of what you acquire…*] (8:69). The verb *eat* does not at all imply that they have been granted ownership over the spoils of war. Rather it means that they can make use of what the Prophet has distributed to them.

It also shows that [*and know that…khums* verse 8:41] did not abrogate *say: the spoils of war belong to Allah and His Messenger* (8:1). This is because [*and know that…*] forbids the fighters from making use of all of the spoils of war. However, verse 8:1 already established that the spoils of war belong to God and the Prophet, not them personally. Therefore, this verse reinforces that the spoils of war belong to God and His Messenger, but allows them to use what is theirs. Therefore, there is no contradiction between these two verses and hence no abrogation. Instead, from all three sets of verses together, it can be deduced that God and His Messenger own the spoils of war. Then, four-fifths of it is distributed to the fighters, who may use it as they please, whereas a fifth (the *khums*) belong specifically to God, the Messenger, the near of kin, and others.

Additionally, from the above interpretation, it can be understood that since *ghanāʾim* is used for the *anfāl* (which is the plural of *nafal*, meaning "excess"), the ruling given here is meant in general. It is as if it is saying: "They ask you about the *ghanāʾim*, which are the excess things that no one claims ownership of. If it be thus, then tell them the ruling about excess acquisitions and *anfāl*. Tell them that the *anfāl* belong to God and His Messenger; this implies that the *ghanīmah* also belong to God and His Messenger."

This could possibly reinforce the view that the definite article *al-* in the first occurrence of *al-anfāl* in verse 8:1 refers to specific spoils of war. However, the definite article *al-* in the second occurrence of *al-anfāl* in verse 8:1 either refers to the category of *anfāl* as a whole or denotes all instances of the category of *anfāl*.[1] This would explain why the noun *anfāl* is repeated in the verse rather than replaced with a pronoun.[2]

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1 That is, the first *al-* is *lām al-ʿahd*, and the second is either *lām al-jins* or *lām al-istighrāq*. [Trans.]

2 That is, it says *Say: The spoils of war belong to Allah and His Messenger…* rather

It also shows that *Say: The* anfāl *are for Allah and His Messenger* is an overarching ruling, encompassing all types of ownerless properties and acquisitions, not just spoils of war, such as abandoned houses, ghost towns and ruins, mountaintops, canyon-clefts, kings' wealth,[1] and wealth or property with no inheritor. *Anfāl* in the sense of spoils of war pertains specifically to Muslim soldiers under the command of the Prophet. The remainder falls under the ownership of God and His Messenger.

This is what can be understood from pondering over these verses. However, exegetes have wrangled tremendously over these verses. It would serve no purpose here to argue for or against their views; therefore, those who are interested in learning more may consult the exegetical tomes.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٣﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا ۚ لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٤﴾

(8:2-4) ***The believers are only those whose hearts tremble when the name of Allah is mentioned, whose faith increases when Allah's signs are recited for them, and who trust in their Lord, who establish the prayer and spend of what We have given them. Truly these are the believers; they have ranks before their Lord, forgiveness, and an honorable sustenance.***

These three verses explain the distinctions of the true believers. They discuss their faith, their noble traits, and copious divine reward. They build upon and emphasize the last phrase of verse 8:1 (*Mind Allah and rectify what is between yourselves, and obey Allah and His messenger—if you be believers*).

Out of all the characteristics of faith, God selects five of them here,

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than *Say: They belong to Allah and His Messenger*…. [Trans.]

1 That is, wealth or property specifically allocated for the use of a king or ruler who was conquered or who surrendered, but which is not considered part of the spoils of war. [Trans.]

for these five traits bring the others along with them—though they be many—as does true faith. If people turn their attention towards these traits and try to instill them inside themselves, it will pave the way for their souls to be mindful of God, for the people to reconcile with each other, and for them to obey God and His Messenger.

These five traits are as follows: (a) their hearts tremble and flutter at the remembrance of God, (b) their faith increases when they hear the verses of the Qur'an, which are the signs of God, (c) they trust in God, (d) they establish the prayer, and (e) the spend [charitably, and on others] out of the sustenance that God has granted them. Obviously, the first three traits pertain to the heart, and the latter two to the limbs.

These traits are listed in the order in which they naturally appear, for the light of faith dawns gradually in the heart, then blossoms until it reaches its true fullness. Initially, it inspires the heart towards reverence and fear when God is mentioned. This is what is meant by: *The believers are only those whose hearts tremble when the name of Allah is mentioned*.

Then, faith continues to spread and branch off in the ways mentioned in the verse, guiding towards true understanding. Whenever a faithful person contemplates these things, their faith increases and strengthens, until it becomes true certainty. This is what is meant by: …*whose faith increases when Allah's signs are recited for them*.

After their faith burgeons to perfection, they comprehend the stature of their Lord vis-à-vis their own station. They understand reality as it is. They see that all matters lie with God, for He alone is the Lord to whom all things return. Thus, man's true charge is to trust in God and traipse after His will, taking Him as their guardian in all worldly matters which weigh on their minds, contenting themselves with what He has allocated to them for their journey through this life, following His ordinances, enjoining His commands and prohibitions. This is what is meant by: … *and who trust in their Lord*.

Then, after full faith has settled in the heart, it impels the human being—the servant of God—to worship his Lord. He sets himself to the station of worship and sincere humility; this is prayer, and is a matter between himself and his Lord. He also fulfills people's needs in society. When people experience shortfalls or need assistance, he spends on the

deprived from the sustenance that God has granted him—whether that be wealth, knowledge, or something else. This is a matter between himself and other members of his society. This is what is meant by: *who establish the prayer and spend of what We have given them*.

The expression *whose faith increases* speaks of an increase in the quality rather than the quantity of faith; that is, it speaks of an increase in the intensity and perfection of faith. This is in contrast to the view of some exegetes, who hold that it refers to an increase in the numbers of the faithful.

Truly these are the believers; they have ranks before their Lord, forgiveness, and an honorable sustenance: Here, God utters His decree: faith shall be planted in whoever exhibits these five traits. Therefore, they all *have ranks before their Lord, forgiveness, and an honorable sustenance*, and no further distinctions are mentioned, for all true believers share these five traits and enjoy a generous divine reward.

*They have ranks before their Lord, forgiveness (*maghfirah*), and an honorable sustenance (*rizq karīm*)*: *Forgiveness* is God's pardon of their sins. *Honorable sustenance* is the blessings they shall enjoy in the garden. Elsewhere in the Qur'an, God also expresses His will that they should enjoy an honorable sustenance in the garden, such as in:

> *Those who believe and do good shall have an honorable sustenance, whereas those who strive against Our signs shall find themselves feeble; they shall be the inhabitants of the fire.* (22:50-51)

From this, it becomes clear that *they have ranks before their Lord, forgiveness, and an honorable sustenance* speaks of degrees of nearness, station and adoration (*zulfā*), and degrees of spiritual honor.

Degrees of nearness to God naturally beget forgiveness and the garden.

When this verse speaks of *ranks before their Lord*, it means that all of the faithful, altogether, have these ranks, not that each one of them has all these ranks. This is because faith necessarily varies and is instilled in varying degrees. Therefore, some of the faithful are at the first rank; some are at the second; and others have different ranks or degrees of faith. This understanding is reinforced by these verses:

> *Allah raises in rank the faithful among them, and those with knowledge.* (58:11)

Is the one who pursues the pleasure of Allah like the one who purchases Allah's wrath? Such a person finds a home in Hell—and what an evil destination. They are ranks before Allah, and Allah sees what you do. (3:162-163)

Some exegetes hold that *ranks* (darajāt) here refers to the levels of Paradise. However, the above explanation refutes this view. Rather, *ranks* should be taken as referring to levels of nearness to God, as has been explained, even though higher levels of nearness to God correspond to higher levels in Paradise.

كَمَا أَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَيْتِكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَكَارِهُونَ ۝٥ يُجَادِلُونَكَ فِي الْحَقِّ بَعْدَ مَا تَبَيَّنَ كَأَنَّمَا يُسَاقُونَ إِلَى الْمَوْتِ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ ۝٦

(8:5-6) ***[Remember] how your Lord caused you to go forth from your house in truth, although a group of the believers were averse, disputing with you about the truth*** **(yujādilūnaka fī al-ḥaqq)** ***after it had become clear, as if they were being driven forth towards death while beholding it.***

The text gives the sense that *[Remember] how your Lord caused you to go forth* pertains to what was being discussed in *Say: The spoils of war belong to Allah and the Messenger*, and means: "God has decreed that the spoils of war belong to Himself and His Messenger. This is right, although you dislike it, just as some of you disliked how God caused you to forth from your house, even though it was the right thing. All of this has a role in improving their religious and worldly affairs, although they perceive it not."

Some exegetes maintain that *[Remember] how your Lord caused you to go forth* pertains to *disputing with you about the truth after it had become clear* (8:6). Others say that the linguistic governer here is the meaning of truth, and that it means: "This reminder is part of the truth, just as He sent you forth from your house in truth." However—as you see—both of these views are far from the actual context of the verses.

Ḥaqq ("truth") here means the opposite of falsehood. It is used to

denote something established which has desirable real-life consequences. When one of God's acts—such as sending them forth from their houses—is described as "true"—it means that it must be done.

Some exegetes say that *ḥaqq* here refers to the revelation; others say that it means "jihad". However, both of these views are farfetched. There are also other views.

Yujādilūnaka comes from the root *j-d-l*, which originally meant "to twist". It is used in the expression *zamānun jadīl*, meaning "a tightly twisted rein/braid". According to *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, *jidāl* is used to mean "quarrelling" because a quarrel goes round and round from viewpoint to viewpoint.

Together, the two verses mean that God's decree about the spoils of war was right, even though they disliked it. Similarly, it was also right for them to be sent forth from their homes in Medina, even though a group of the believers disliked it and argued over whether it had been right after it had been made wholly clear to them. They were acting like people being driven forth towards death with all the implements of execution in front of them!

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Jāmiʿ al-Jawāmiʿ*, al-Ṭabrisī writes:
Ibn Masʿūd, [Imām] ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, [Imām] al-Bāqir, and [Imām] al-Ṣādiq used to recite [this verse as]: "They ask you for the spoils of war (*yasʾalūnaka al-anfāl*)."

Author's comments: This is also narrated [elsewhere] from Ibn Masʿūd, [Imām] al-Sajjād, [Imām] al-Bāqir, [Imām] al-Ṣādiq, and others.

(2) It is narrated in *al-Kāfī* via a chain of narration from al-ʿAbd al-Ṣāliḥ [Imām al-Kāẓim]:
The *anfāl* are the ruins whose inhabitants have perished, and lands which were not best by horses or riders; rather, they were acquired by treaty and given freely without any fighting.
He—that is, the legal sovereign (*wālī*)—has jurisdiction over mountaintops, canyon-clefts, thickets, and unowned barren lands. He also takes possession of the [former] king's holdings, insofar as

they have not been usurped, for usurped wealth must be returned. He inherits from those who have no inheritor, and provides for those who cannot provide for themselves.

(3) In *al-Kafi*, via a chain of narration from Imām al-Ṣādiq, regarding *they ask you about the spoils of war* (anfāl) (8:1), Imām al-Ṣādiq says:
When someone dies and leaves no heir, their property becomes part of the *anfāl*.

Author's comments: Many Shiʿi narrations reiterate the meaning of these two narrations. Although they do not describe the *anfāl* as spoils of war, this presents no problem here since the context of the verses indicates it that [in the verse] it is taken as such.

(4) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related that Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ said:[1]
Four verses of the Book of God were revealed on my account. My mother had sworn not to eat or drink until I parted ways from Muḥammad. Therefore, God revealed: *If they urge you to take partners to Me which you know not of, do not obey them, but associate kindly and mannerly with them in the world* (31:15). Second, a sword that I had nabbed [during battle] struck my fancy, so I said, "O Messenger of God, give me this." Then, the verse was revealed: *They ask you about the spoils of war…* (8:1). Third, I fell ill, and the Messenger of God came to me. I told him, "O Messenger of God, I want to divide my wealth; shall I bequeath half?" He said, "No." I said, "A third?" He fell silent, and, thereafter, bequeathing a third was allowed. And, fourth, I was drinking wine with some of the Anṣār in when one of their men bashed me in the nose with the jawbone of a camel. I went to the Prophet, and the verse prohibiting wine was revealed.

Author's comments: This narration has some discrepancies.
First, the context of verses 31:14-15 (*We have ordained for man goodness*

1 In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, al-Ṭayālisī, al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, Muslim, al-Nuḥās in his *Nāsikh*, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Shuʿb* [*Shuʿb al-Īmān*] attribute this to Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ. [Trans.]

to his parents, and if they urge you to take partners to Me…) implies that these verses are meant as a general exhortation, not for a specific case. Furthermore, as verse 6:151 (*Say: "Come, I shall recite what your Lord forbidden for you—that you do not associate partners with Me, and show kindness to your parents…'*) shows, goodness towards one's parents has been ordained overall, not just as part of one specific religious code to the exclusion of another.

Second, the story of Ṣaʿd ibn Abī Waqāṣ collecting a sword and asking the Prophet to grant it to him suits the alternate recitation of *they ask you for the spoils of war* (*yasʾalūnaka al-anfāl*), not *they ask you about the spoils of war* (*yasʾalūnaka ʿan al-anfāl*), which has already been explained above.

Third, it is established via the Sunnah, not the Qur'an, that a bequest may be made of one-third of one's wealth; no verses to this effect were revealed.

Fourth, even if it is true that he was drinking wine with some of the companions and was struck in the nose with a camel jawbone, he was not only drinking with the Anṣār; rather, he was drinking with a group of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, and it was ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb who broke his nose. Then, God revealed the verse in Sūrah al-Māʾidah. That is, God did not directly prohibit wine but rather conveyed an intensified distaste for it: *O you who believe, wine and gambling and idols and lots are filthy acts of Satan, so spurn them so that you may be successful* (5:90).

(5) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related that Abū Umāmah said:[1]
I asked ʿUbādah ibn al-Ṣāmit about the [verse of] *anfāl*.[2]
He said: "It was revealed about those of us who were present at the Battle of Badr. It was revealed when we disagreed over the spoils of war (*nafl*), and our dispute soured. Then God took all of it out of our hands and put it in control of the Messenger of God, who divided it among the Muslims.
Barāʾ added that he divided the spoils equally.

1 In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Aḥmad, ʿAbd ibn Ḥamīd, Ibn Jarīr, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh, al-Ḥākim, and al-Bayhaqī in his *Sunan* attribute this to Abū Umāmah. [Trans.]

2 That is, he asked about verse 8:1, not about *anfāl* as a general concept. [Trans.]

(6) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related that ʿUbādah ibn Ṣāmit said:[1]
We marched forth with the Messenger of God, and I witnessed [the Battle of] Badr with him. We met forces, and God routed them. One contingent chased after them, defeating them and finishing them off, while another contingent descended on the [former] troops, gathering the spoils of war. A third contingent surrounded the Messenger of God so that no harm would befall him.
When night fell, and the contingents returned, those who had collected the spoils of war said, "We are the ones who collected this, so no one else has any share."
However, those who had chased after the enemy said, "You have no greater right to it than we. We are the ones who drove the enemy away [so you could collect it] and vanquished them."
Then those who had protected the Messenger of God said, "You have no greater right to it than us. We were guarding the Messenger of God, since we feared that the enemy might harm him. This was what we were busy with."
Then the verse was revealed: *They ask you about the spoils of war. Say: The spoils of war belong to Allah and the Messenger. Mind Allah and rectify what is between yourselves* (8:1). Then the Messenger of God divided them among the Muslims.

(7) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related that Ibn ʿAbbās said:[2]
On the day of Badr, the Prophet said: "Whoever kills an enemy shall have this and that, and whoever takes a captive shall have this and that."
The elders planted themselves beneath the banners, whereas the

1 In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Saʿīd ibn Manṣūr, Aḥmad, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Ḥibbān, Abū al-Shaykh, al-Ḥākim, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī—who deems it authentic—attribute this to ʿUbādah ibn Ṣāmit. [Trans.]

2 In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn Abī Shaybah, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nasāʾī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Ḥabbān, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh, al-Ḥākim, and al-Bayhaqī—who deems it authentic in *al-Dalāʾil*—attribute this to Ibn ʿAbbās. [Trans.]

youths rushed into fighting and plundering. The elders said to the youths: "Give us a share, for we provided assistance to you; had you faced any difficulties, you would have taken shelter with us." They brought their dispute to the Prophet, and the verse was revealed: *They ask you about the spoils of war. Say: The spoils of war belong to Allah and the Messenger* (8:1). Then he divided the spoils of war between them equally.

Author's comments: There are many other narrations expressing the same idea and fleshing out the details of the Qur'anic story. We shall mention them in the latter sections on some of the following verses.

Some narrations say that the Prophet had promised to grant them the spoils and plunder, and then God abrogated that by saying: *Say: the spoils of war are for Allah and the Messenger*; these narrations imply that. Some might also glean from these narrations that a leader (*imām*) does not have to fulfill his promises to the fighters. However, this inference would be incorrect, since they were arguing about the spoils of war on the Day of Badr; and had the Prophet already made promises to them about that, they would not have differed, since the matter would have already been made clear to them.

(8) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn Jarīr relates from Mujāhid:

The Prophet was asked what would be done with the fifth part of *khums* after the first four parts [had been distributed], whereupon this verse was revealed: *They ask you about the spoils of war…* (8:1).

Author's comments: This does not agree with what was previously mentioned regarding the context and contents of the verse. Some early exegetes, like Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, Mujāhid, and ʿIkrimah, relate from Ibn ʿAbbās that the verse *They ask you about the spoils of war. Say: The spoils of war are for Allah and His Messenger…* was abrogated by *Know that whatever you gain, a fifth of it is for Allah and His Messenger* (8:41). However, our previous discussion shows that abrogation did not occur here.

(9) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related that al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad

said:[1]

I heard a man asking Ibn ʿAbbās about the spoils of war (*anfāl*). He said that they included horses and plunder. He repeated his question, and Ibn ʿAbbās said the same thing. Then the man asked, "What are the *anfāl* which God mentions in His book?" He kept repeating his question as if he was trying to corner him. Finally, Ibn ʿAbbās said, "This man is like Ṣabīgh whom ʿUmar struck."[2]

Another version says that he said, "Do you need someone to wallop you, like ʿUmar did to Ṣabīgh, the Iraqi?" For ʿUmar had beaten him until blood flowed to his heels.

(10) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, regarding *truly these are the believers* (8:4), al-Ṭabarānī relates from al-Ḥārith ibn Mālik al-Anṣārī:

Ḥārith passed by the Messenger of God, who said, "How are you today, Ḥārith?"

Ḥārith said, "I have awoken as a true believer."

The Prophet said, "Consider what you say, for every claim has an underlying reality. What is the reality of your faith?"

Ḥārith said, "I have disassociated myself from the world. I have stayed awake at night and remained thirsty during the day. It is as if I see the inhabitants of Paradise visiting each other, and the inhabitants of the Fire crying out to each other."

The Prophet said, "O Ḥārith, you have understood, so hold fast to that." He said that three times.

Author's comments: This narration is related via numerous Shiʿi chains of narration.

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1 In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Mālik, Ibn Abī Shaybah, Abu ʿUbayd, ʿAbd ibn Ḥamīd, Ibn Jarīr, al-Nuḥās, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh, and Ibn Mardawayh attribute this to al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad. [Trans.]

2 ʿUmar beat Ṣabīgh for asking too many foolish questions. [Trans.]

Verses 7 to 14

These verses refer to the Battle of Badr, which was the first battle in the history of Islam. The context indicates that they were revealed after the Battle of Badr, as will be shown.

وَإِذْ يَعِدُكُمُ اللَّهُ إِحْدَى الطَّائِفَتَيْنِ أَنَّهَا لَكُمْ وَتَوَدُّونَ أَنَّ غَيْرَ ذَاتِ الشَّوْكَةِ تَكُونُ لَكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَيَقْطَعَ دَابِرَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٧﴾

(8:7) ***[Remember] when Allah promised you that one of the two companies would be yours, and you hoped the one without battle-rage would be yours. But Allah willed to verify the truth through His words and sever the root of the unbelievers.***

Meaning, "Remember when God promised you [victory over one of the two companies]." This verse declares God's blessings and favors upon them so that they perceive that God only commands or decrees something when it is right, when it protects their best interests, and when it helps them bring their efforts to fruition. Therefore, they should not disagree amongst themselves or dislike what He has chosen for them. Rather, they should cede their affairs to Him and obey the Messenger.

The *two companies* (ṭāʾifatayn) refers to the ʿĪr and the Nafīr. The ʿĪr were the Quraysh's caravan which bore their trade-goods and wealth. It had forty men, including Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb. The Nafīr were the Quraysh's army, and consisted of about one thousand men.

***One of the two companies* (iḥdā al-ṭāʾifatayn):** This is a second object of the verb *promised you (yaʿidukum)*.

***[They] would be yours* (annahā lakum):** Grammatically, this is a restatement of the previous phrase in different words (*badal*).

***You* (pl.) *hoped* (tuwaddūn)…:** This is an adverbial clause (*ḥāl*)

contextualizing the previous statement.[1]

***Without battle-rage* (ghayra dhāt al-shawkah):** Meaning, the ʿĪr caravan, which had fewer men and less armament than the Nafīr. *Shawkah* means "rage" or "vehemence" and is a figure of speech derived from *shawk* ("thorns", "spikes").

***But Allah willed to verify the truth through His words* (bi-kalimātihi):** This is also an adverbial clause.

Verify (yuḥaqqiq al-ḥaqq) means to demonstrate the truth and establish it through a series of effects. *His words* are His decree to aid His prophets and to grant ascendancy to His true religion. Elsewhere, God says:

> *And Our word has gone forth with respect to Our servants, the messengers. They shall be the ones who receive divine assistance, and Our hosts shall be victorious.* (37:171-173)

> *They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah will perfect His light, though the unbelievers may be averse. He it is Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the true religion, that He may make it overcome the religions, all of them, though the polytheists may be averse.* (61:8-9)

The word *kalimātihi* ("His words") in this verse is also sometimes read as *kalimatihi* ("His word"); this latter reading seems better.

Sever the root* (yaqṭaʿa dābir) *of the unbelievers: "Severing the root" (*qaṭʿ dābir*) is a figure of speech meaning to eradicate something in such a way that it can never return and which leaves no trace; it becomes wholly extinct.

The verse means: "Remember when God promised you that one of the two companies would be yours. Regardless of whether it was the ʿĪr or Nafīr caravan, you would have the upper hand, through the help of God. You had hoped it would be the ʿĪr caravan, for you had heard of the strength, valor, and grit of the Nafīr, whereas you were puny and weak. However, God willed otherwise. God willed that you would encounter the Nafīr, so that He could make you victorious over them and manifest His decree, thus rooting out the faithless."

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1 Therefore, grammatically, it is in the present tense, even though it refers to something which already happened. [Trans.]

لِيُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ وَيُبْطِلَ الْبَاطِلَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٨﴾

(8:8) ***To verify the truth*** **(li-yuḥaqqiq al-ḥaqq)** ***and dispel falsehood*** **(wa yubṭil al-bāṭil)*****, although the guilty abhor it.***

From the text of the verse, it can be understood that *l-* in *li-yuḥaqiq* denotes an endpoint or final goal, and that *li-yuḥaqqiq* relates back to *Allah promised you* (yaʿidukum, 8:7). Meaning, this is what God promised: He shall never waver in His promise to manifest the truthfulness of truth and the falsity of falsehood, although the guilty abhor it and do not want that to happen.

Therefore, it is clear that *to verify the truth* is not merely a repetition of the expression *Allah willed to verify the truth through His words*, even though it means something similar.

إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُمْ بِأَلْفٍ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُرْدِفِينَ ﴿٩﴾

(8:9) ***[Remember] when you sought aid*** **(tastaghīthūn)** ***from your Lord, and He answered you: "I will assist you*** **(mumiddukum)** ***with a thousand angels following*** **(murdafin)."**

Tastaghīthūn means to seek aid (*ghawth*); that is, support and victory (*nuṣrah*), as in the verse: *He sought aid (*istighāthahu*) against his enemy from the one on his side* (28:15). *Mumidd* takes its conventional meaning of "help".

Murdafin comes from the root *r-d-f* ("follow"; "line up"; "hindquarters"). *Irdāf* are rear men riding on the same animal; *radf* means "following". Al-Rāghib says:

Radf means "following". A woman's *ridf* are her buttocks. *Tarāduf* means to go in sequence. *Rādif* means "late" or "delayed", whereas *murdif* is used for a rider in front who seats someone behind him.

With this meaning in mind, it is clear that this verse speaks of the same event as this verse in Sūrah Āl-i ʿImrān:

And Allah did certainly assist you at Badr when you were weak; mind Allah then, that you may give thanks. When you said to the

believers: "Does it not suffice you that your Lord should assist you with three thousand of the angels sent down?" Truly! If you remain patient and are on your guard, and they come upon you in a headlong manner, your Lord will assist you with five thousand havoc-making angels. And Allah did not make it but as good news for you, and that your hearts might be at ease thereby, and victory is only from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise. (3:123-126)

When verses 3:123-126 and verse 8:9 are taken together, it can be understood that when verse 8:9 says that *a thousand angels following* were sent, it means that one thousand angels were sent following the three thousand angels.

From this, it is clear that the following exegetical views are invalid:

Angels following means a group of one thousand angels with another group of one thousand angels behind it, thereby making contingents of two thousand angels.

It means that some of them were following some others.

It means that they were following the Muslims; *murdifīn* means *rādifīn* ("seated behind").

The Muslims were the ones who followed them, since the angels went to the forefront of the Muslim army and cast terror into the hearts of the faithless.

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهِ قُلُوبُكُمْ ۚ وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

(8:10) ***He did that*** **(jaʿalahu)** ***only to offer glad tidings and set your hearts at ease*** **(li-taṭmaʾinna bihi qulūbakum)*****, for victory comes only from Allah alone. Allah is Mighty, Wise.***

The pronoun "that" (*-hu* in *jaʿalahu* and *-hi* in *bihi*) refers to God's sending assistance via the angels; this is what can be inferred from the text. It means that God sent this assistance via the angels for the purpose of giving glad tidings and setting you at ease, not for the purpose of destroying the faithless by their hands. A subsequent verse implies the same:

[Remember] when your Lord revealed to the angels: "I am with

you, so make the believers firm. I shall cast terror into the hearts of the faithless. Then strike above their necks and their every fingertip" (8:12).

This verse also reinforces the exegetical view—expressed by some—that the angels were not sent down to fight the idolaters or kill any of them. Rather, ʿAlī vanquished half or a third of the fallen, and the remainder by the other Muslims.

However, the angels increased the bulk of the Muslims when they were intermingled with them, thereby setting their hearts at ease. They also cast terror into the hearts of the idolaters, which will be discussed shortly.

Victory comes only from Allah alone. Allah is Mighty, Wise: This pronounces that victory, in truth, lies in God, regardless of having great numbers, strength, or valor. On that day, the idolators had greater numbers and strength than the Muslims, who were really quite a meager force.

Allah is Mighty, Wise: This principle underlies everything in this verse and the related parts of the previous verses. God aids them through His might and assists them in this way through His wisdom.

إِذْ يُغَشِّيكُمُ النُّعَاسَ أَمَنَةً مِنْهُ وَيُنَزِّلُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ بِهِ وَيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمْ رِجْزَ الشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيَرْبِطَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتَ بِهِ الْأَقْدَامَ ﴿١١﴾

(8:11) ***[Remember] when He blanketed you with sleepiness* (nuʿās)*, security* (amnatan) *from Him, and sent upon you water from the sky to purify you and wash away Satan's dirt* (rijz)*, and to fortify your hearts and steady your feet.***

Nuʿās is the first stage of sleep; it lightly blankets someone. *Amnah* means *amān* ("safety", "security"). *From Him* means "from God", although some exegetes say that it means "from the enemy". *Rijz* means "dirt", "impurity", or "filth". Here, *Satan's dirt* means the filth He might cast into someone's heart by whispering deceptions to them, filling them with anxiety, and seducing them.

The verse means: It was when sleepiness overtook them that aid and assistance arrived, in the form of glad tidings and certainty in their hearts.

This sleepiness was a form of security that God bestowed upon their hearts, whereupon they slept; were they fearful, they would neither have felt sleepy nor slept. Then rain fell upon them to purify them, wash away Satan's whispers, and make their hearts firm; *to fortify your hearts* is a figure of speech meaning to make them brave. The rain also fell in order to grant them a firm foothold during the battle by making the sand sticky, or making their hearts staunch.

This verse lends confirmation to what has been narrated—that the idolaters had arrived at the water-source first and camped there upon the sandhills. Then they had fallen into states of major or minor impurity, and were beset by thirst. Satan seized that opportunity to whisper to them: "You enemy has beat you to the water. You are going to pray with nasty bowels and balls while your feet are slipping on the sand?" Then God sent rain upon them so they could cleanse themselves, thereby removing major and minor ritual impurities, and to make the ground sticky for them and muddy for the enemy.

إِذْ يُوحِي رَبُّكَ إِلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ أَنِّي مَعَكُمْ فَثَبِّتُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۚ سَأُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ فَاضْرِبُوا فَوْقَ الْأَعْنَاقِ وَاضْرِبُوا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ ﴿١٢﴾

(8:12) ***[Remember] when your Lord revealed to the angels: "I am with you, so make the believers firm. I shall cast terror into the hearts of the faithless. Then strike above their necks and their every fingertip."***

The grammatical structure of this verse is similar to that of the verses *when you sought aid from your Lord* (8:9) and *when He blanketed you with sleepiness* (8:11). All these verses are adverbial clauses[1] framed in the time when these things happened. The meaning of the [first two sentences of the] verse is clear.

Then strike above their necks and their every fingertip: The expression *above their necks* comes across as meaning striking their heads, and *their*

1 And thus, also, grammatically, it is in the present tense, even though referring to past events. [Trans.]

every fingertip comes across as meaning striking their hands and feet, or their fingers, so they cannot bear weapons and use them to attack.

Possibly, *then strike* is addressed to the angels; this is what comes to mind when encountering the verse. *Strike above their necks and their every fingertip* either should be understood in its literal, conventional meaning, or else metaphorically, meaning to humiliate them and terrify them so they cannot hold on to their weapons. *Then strike* could also be addressed to the faithful and be intended to embolden them against the enemy, to make their feet and hearts firm, and to incite them against the idolaters.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَاقُّوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١٣﴾

(8:13) ***For they clove off from and tormented* (shāqū)** ***Allah and His Messenger. Whoever contravenes Allah and His Messenger—Allah requites mightily!***

Shāqū means "to oppose", "to violate", or "to infringe".[1] It comes from the root *sh-q-q*, meaning "to divide". One who breaks off inclines towards his own side and against the opposing side. It means that this is the consequence that God afflicted the idolaters with, for they persistently transgressed against God and His messenger; and whoever secedes from God and His Messenger shall face a heavy consequence.

ذَٰلِكُمْ فَذُوقُوهُ وَأَنَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٤﴾

(8:14) ***Taste this. The faithless shall have punishment in the fire.***

This is an emphatic address to the faithless. Disgrace has descended upon them, and they now must taste it. Beyond that—they are told—is punishment in the fire.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, it is related from Ibn ʿAbbās:
On the day of Badr, when the two sides had lined up for battle,

1 It also carries the connotation of "to trouble", "to burden", or "to harass", as reflected in the translation of *shāqū* as *clove off from and tormented*. [Trans.]

Abū Jahl said, "O God, grant victory to the worthiest side!"
The Muslims also prayed for aid, whereupon angels were sent down, along with the verse: *[Remember] when you sought aid from your Lord…* (8:9).
Some have related:
When the Prophet saw how many idolaters there were, and how few the Muslims were, he faced the *qiblah* and implored, "O God! Fulfill Your promise to me! O God! If this tiny band is destroyed, you shall not be worshipped upon the earth."
He kept on calling out to his Lord with outstretched hands until his robe slipped from his shoulders, and God revealed: *[Remember] when you sought aid from your Lord…* (8:9).
It is related from ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, al-Saddī, and Abū Ṣāliḥ, as well as Imam al-Bāqir:
When evening fell, God cast drowsiness over the companions. They had halted in a very sandy place, where their feet kept slipping. So God sent a drizzle upon them so that the ground would solidify and their feet would hold firm. However, the Quraysh experienced a downpour. God cast fear into their hearts, as in the verse: *I shall cast terror into the hearts of the faithless* (8:12).

Author's comments: The wording of *[Remember] when you sought aid from your Lord…* (8:9) conflicts with the notion that it was revealed on the day of Badr after they pleaded for aid. Rather, it suggests that it was revealed along with *They ask you about the spoils of war* (8:1) and the following verses, and that it is speaking about a past event, reminding the Muslims of God's blessings—such as aid and other multifaceted blessings—to urge them to obey His commands and prohibitions.

Possibly, when the narration says that the verse was revealed on the day of Badr after they sought aid, this is because it was related to that situation [not because it actually was revealed on the day of Badr]. This often happens in narrations about why Qur'anic verses were revealed.

(2) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is related from Ibn Shahrāshūb:
The Prophet said in al-ʿArīsh: "O God! If you destroy this tiny band today, you shall never be worshipped on the earth everafter."

Then *[Remember] when you sought aid from your Lord…* (8:9) was revealed, and so he went out saying, "Their forces shall be defeated, and they shall flee." God aided him with five thousand havoc-making angels, who made the Muslims appear greater in number to the idolaters, and the idolaters appear fewer than they actually were to them. Then the verse was revealed: *They were on the further side* (8:42) of the wadi—behind the wide, vast canyon—and the Prophet was *on the nearer [or lower] side* (8:42), by the well.

Author's comments: The same thing that was said about the previous narration can be said about this one.

(3) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, al-Balkhī relates from al-Ḥasan:
[Remember] when Allah promised you that one of the two companies would be yours (8:7) was revealed before *[Remember] how your Lord caused you to go forth from your house in truth* (8:5), although it is recited after it.

Author's comments: Just because the first verse discusses something that happened before the second does not mean that it was revealed first; nothing in the text evinces this.

(4) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is related from Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Khathʿamī from Imām al-Ṣādiq about the verse *[Remember] when Allah promised you that one of the two companies would be yours, and you hoped the one without battle-rage (*shawkah*) would be yours* (8:7):
Shawkah is what arises during combat.

Author's comments: Something similar has been related by al-Qummī in his exegesis.

(5) *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* says:
Biographers, and Abū Ḥamzah and ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm in their exegeses, relate with slight variations that Abū Sufyān approached with the caravan of the Quraysh from Syria which was transporting perfumes. The Quraysh had forty riders.

The Prophet called his companions to come out and seize it. He said, "Perhaps God will bring this wealth to your side."

They complied—some swiftly; others, slowly. They hadn't thought that the Prophet would encounter an ambush or battle. They had marched out only expecting to meet Abū Sufyān and his caravan, and only had their eyes on the spoils of war.

However, when Abū Sufyān caught wind of the movement of the Prophet, he commissioned Ḍamḍam ibn ʿAmr al-Ghaffārī to go to Mecca and mobilize the Quraysh. He was to tell them that Muḥammad and his companions had intercepted their caravan. So Ḍamḍam made haste to Mecca. Three nights before he arrived, ʿĀtikah bint ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib had dreamt that a man had come from the caravan, crying out, "O Āl Ghālib! Go forth to your deaths!" Then he rode his camel atop Mount Qubays, seized a boulder, and sent it rolling down the mountain, whereupon it shattered into fragments. The fragments struck the houses of the Quraysh; not a single house was unafflicted.

Terrified, she awoke with a jolt and told al-ʿAbbās about it. Al-ʿAbbās, in turn, told ʿUtbah ibn Rabīʿ, who said, "A calamity will befall the Quraysh." News of the dream spread among them, and reached Abū Jahl, who said, "She is a second prophet in the house of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib. By Lāt and ʿUzzā, let us wait three days and see if this dream comes true. If it does not, then let us write a declaration that the Arabs have no greater liars, male or female, than Banū Hāshim."

On the third day, Ḍamḍam arrived, calling out at the top of his voice: "O Āl Ghālib! O Āl Ghālib! The perfumes! The perfumes! The caravan! The caravan! They have reached it—but I do not think you can catch them. Muḥammad and his boys from Yathrib have gone out to intercept your caravan. Prepare to march forth!"

All the chieftains of the Quraysh dipped into their pockets to fund the army, and they swore to destroy the house of anyone who did not march out. Among those who marched forth with them were al-ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, Nawfal ibn al-Ḥarith ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, and ʿAqīl ibn Abī Tālib. They also brought

slaves playing tambourines.

The Messenger of God marched out with three-hundred thirteen men. When they neared Badr, he sent out a scout.

It is related in a narration from Abū Ḥamzah:

The Messenger of God also sent a scout to spy on the caravan. His name was ʿUdayy. Upon return, he told the Messenger of God where the caravan had rested and departed, whereupon Gabriel descended to the Messenger of God and told him that the idolaters in Mecca had taken up arms and were marching forth from Mecca.

He consulted with his companions about whether they should pursue the caravan or fight the army. Abū Bakr stood and said, "O Messenger of God! From the time they rejected [you and your call], the Quraysh's vainglory has never faltered. Furthermore, from the time they rose to might, they have never weakened. However, we are unprepared for war."

A narration from Abū Ḥamzah also relates:

Abū Bakr said, "I am familiar with this route and the place where ʿUday left the caravan of the Quraysh. If we both continue following that route, we will encounter each other at the well of Badr on this-and-that day, like two equally matched race-horses rushing to the goal."

The Prophet said, "Sit."

Abū Bakr sat.

The Prophet asked ʿUmar for his view. ʿUmar said the same thing as Abū Bakr.

The Prophet said, "Sit."

ʿUmar sat.

Then the Prophet asked Miqdād for his view. Miqdād said, "O Messenger of God! The Quraysh may be haughty. However, we have faith in you and trust you. We have borne witness that what you have brought is the truth. By God, even if you told us to cast ourselves onto freshly-kindled embers and spiky thorn-bushes, we would do so with you. We will not tell you the same thing that the Children of Israel told Moses: 'You and your Lord go and fight;

we will stay right here.' Rather, we will say, 'Fulfill the command of your Lord; we shall fight with you."

The Prophet thanks him, then said, "Tell me your view, O people." By this, he had the Anṣār in mind, since they formed the bulk of the group. Furthermore, when they had paid allegiance at ʿAqabah, they had said, "We take no responsibility for your protection until you arrive at our dwellings. Then, once you are among us, we shall shield you like we would shield our own children or women." Thus, he had been concerned that they would not aid him in fending off enemies outside of the city.

However, Saʿd ibn Maʿadh stood and said, "May my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of God! It is as if you had us in mind."

He said, "Yes."

He said, "By my father and mother, O Messenger of God! We have believed in you and trusted you and borne witness that you have brought the truth from God. Command us however you will! Take our wealth, however you will, and leave us with whatever you will. By God, were you to command us to jump into this sea, we would do so with you. Mayhaps God—the Mighty and Glorious—will show you something from us that will bring joy to your eyes, and thus God's blessings might flow through us."

Gladdened, the Messenger of God said, "Go forth, with the blessings of God, for God—the Mighty and Glorious—has promised me one of the two companies, and God never breaks His promise. By God, it is as if I see the downfall of Abū Jahl ibn Hishām, ʿUtbah ibn Rabīʿ, Shaybah ibn Rabīʿ, and this-person, and that-person."

God commanded the Messenger of God to move on, and so he moved towards Badr, which was the name of a well.

It is related in a narration from Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī:

"Badr" was originally the name of a man from the Juhaynah tribe who owned that well; after that, the well became known as "Badr". The Quraysh also headed towards it and sent their slaves forward to draw water from the well. The companions of the Messenger

of God captured them and asked, "Who are you?"
They said, "We are the slaves belonging to the Quraysh."
"So where is the caravan?"
"We know nothing about the caravan," they replied. At that, the companions came forward to strike them.
This was going on while the Messenger of God was praying. After he finished, he said, "If they had told you the truth, you would have hit them, and if they had lied, you would have left them alone."
They brought them to him. He said, "Who are you?"
They said, "O Muḥammad, we are slaves belonging to the Quraysh."
He said, "How many of them are there?"
They said, "We don't know how many."
He said, "How many animals do you slaughter every day?"
They said, "Nine to ten."
The Messenger of God said, "They have nine hundred to a thousand men." Then he commanded that the slaves be held prisoner.
News of this reached the Quraysh. They grew uneasy and regretted coming this way. ʿUtbah ibn Rabīʿ saw Abū al-Bakhtarī ibn Hishām, and said, "Do you see what they're doing to us? By God, I have no idea what to do—we came out to protect our caravan, and it has escaped. Now we have come as the aggressors and transgressors. By God, those who aggress never succeed. I would have preferred that all of the wealth of Banī ʿAbd Manāf in the caravan had been lost, and the caravan had not taken this route."
Abū al-Bakhtarī replied to him, "You are one of the nobles of the Quraysh. Go among the people and make a commitment to pay for the caravan which Muḥammad and his companions have taken in Nakhlah, and also to pay for the blood of Ibn al-Ḥaḍramī, for he is your ally."
He said, "I will do that. None of us dissents apart from Ibn al-Ḥanẓalah"—meaning Abū al-Jahl—"so go to him and tell him I am going to pay for the caravan and the blood of Ibn al-Ḥādramī since he is my ally, and his blood money is on me."

Abū al-Bakhtarī said: "So I went to his tent. He told me, "ʿUtbah is prejudiced towards Muḥammad, since he is also from Banī ʿAbd Manāf, and his son [Abū Ḥudhayfah] is with Muḥammad; he wants to abandon all this. But by Lāt and ʿUzzā, we will invade Yathrib or take them prisoner and drag them to Mecca, and our exploits shall grow legend among the Arabs.'" And Abū Ḥudhayfah ibn ʿUtbah was with the Messenger of God.

When Abū Sufyān had passed the caravan, he had sent a message to the Quraysh: "God has saved your caravan, so head back, and leave Muḥammad and the Arabs alone, and ward this off rather than being hasty. If you do not return home, then at least send home your songstresses." The Messenger of God encountered them at Juḥfah, and ʿUtbah wanted to turn back; however, Abū Jahl and the Banū Makhzūm refused, but they sent the songstresses away from Juḥfah.

He also said:

When the companions of the Prophet heard how many of the Quraysh there were, they feared and began to plead for aid, whereupon the verse was revealed: *[Remember] when you sought aid from your Lord…* (8:9).

Al-Ṭabrisī says:

When morning broke on the Day of Badr, the Messenger of God mobilized his companions. There were two horsemen in his company: Zubayr ibn ʿAwwām and Miqdād ibn al-Aswad. There were also seventy camels which they took turns riding. For instance, the Messenger of God, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and Marthad ibn Abū Marthad al-Ghanawī would take turns Marthad ibn Abū Marthad's camel.

The Quraysh had four hundred horsemen, although some sources say they were two hundred. When the Quraysh saw how few companions the Prophet had, Abū Jahl said, "They're but a morsel. If we sent just our slaves to them, our slaves would capture and shackle them all!"

ʿUtbah ibn Rabīʿ said, "Do you think this could be a trap, or that they have reinforcements on the way?" They dispatched

ʿUmayr ibn Wahb al-Jumaḥī, who was a brave horseman, for reconnaissance. He circled about the camp of the Messenger of God on his horse, then came back and said, "They have no ambush and no allies. However, the water-carrier camels of Yathrib are carrying death. Do you see? They are mute, not uttering a word, smacking their tongues like serpents. They have no recourse but their swords. I don't think they will turn back before they are killed, and they will not be killed before they have killed the same number as themselves. What do you think?"

Abū Jahl replied, "Fear has made you lie, coward."

Then God revealed the verse: *if they incline towards peace, then incline to it…* (8:61). The Messenger of God sent them an envoy, who said, "O assembly of Quraysh! I prefer not to initiate aggression towards you. Leave me to the Arabs, and go back the way you came."

ʿUtbah said, "Anyone who rejected such a proposal would never prosper." ʿUtbah was riding a red camel; he spurred it on. When the Messenger of God saw him riding around the two camps and discouraging the people from war, he said, "If there is any good in anyone, it is in the red-camel rider. If they obey him, they will be rightly guided."

Then ʿUtbah addressed the people: "O Quraysh! Obey me today, and defy me for the rest of time. Muḥammad has a blood tie and covenant of protection with you. He is the son of your uncle, so leave him to the Arabs. If he be truthful, he shall bring you more glory, and if he be lying, the wolves of the Arabs will take care of him."

Infuriated, Abū Jahl retorted, "Coward! This is your fear speaking!"

He replied, "You're calling me a coward? You're the one who shit yourself from fear! The Quraysh shall soon know which of us is the true coward –and which one of us is trying to destroy his people." Then he donned his armor and marched forward, along with his brother Shaybah and his son al-Walīd, then shouted, "O Muḥammad! Send out our equals from the Quraysh!"

Three of the Anṣār came out to meet them. They were related to

each other, so they said, “Go back; we want opponents from the Quraysh.”

The Messenger of God looked to ʿUbaydah ibn al-Ḥārith ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, who, on that day, was seventy years old. He told him, “Rise, ʿUbaydah.” Then he looked to Ḥamzah and said, “Rise, my uncle.” Then he looked to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and said, “Rise, ʿAlī.” ʿAlī was the youngest of the group.

After that, he said, “Claim your right which God has given you, for the Quraysh have come haughty and proud, seeking to put out the light of God, but God does not allow His light to be extinguished.” Then he said, “O ʿUbaydah! Take care of ʿUtbah ibn Rabīʿah.” To Ḥamzah, he assigned Shaybah; to ʿAlī, he assigned al-Walīd. They marched forth until they reached the people, then declared, “We are noble matches for you!”

ʿUbaydah attacked ʿUtbah and struck him on the head, cleaving it in two. ʿUtbah also struck ʿUbaydah on the leg, and severed it; they both fell.

Shaybah attacked Ḥamzah, and they fought with swords until they became blunt.

The Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī attacked al-Walīd and struck a vein on his shoulder, and pulled out the sword from his armpit. ʿAlī [later] said, “On that day, al-Walīd took his right hand in his left and used it to strike my head, and it felt as if the sky were falling to the earth.”

Then Ḥamzah and Shaybah grew entangled, and the Muslims said, “O ʿAlī, do you see how that dog has the upper hand over your uncle?” So ʿAlī charged towards him. Since Ḥamzah was taller than Shaybah, ʿAlī said, “O uncle, lower your head.” Ḥamzah put his head on Shaybah’s chest, and ʿAlī struck Shaybah, setting his head flying. Then he came to ʿUtbah, who was breathing his last and killed him.

Another narration says:

Ḥamzah went out to fight ʿUtbah, and ʿUbaydah went out to fight Shaybah, and ʿAlī went out to fight al-Walīd. Ḥamzah killed ʿUtbah; ʿUbaydah killed Shaybah; and ʿAlī killed al-Walīd. Then

Shaybah struck ʿUbaydah's leg, severing it, and Ḥamzah and ʿAlī rescued him and carried him to the Messenger of God. Upon seeing him, ʿUbaydah shed tears and asked, "O Messenger of God, won't I be a martyr?"

He said, "Of course; you will be the first martyr from my family."

Abū Jahl told the Quraysh, "Don't be hasty, and don't be self-concieted like the sons of Rabīʿah. Take on the people of Medina and slaughter them all; but take the Quraysh as captives. Take them alive so we can drag them to Mecca and show them how misguided they were."

Iblīs then came in the form of Surāqah ibn Mālik ibn Juʿshum and told them, "I am your protector. Give me your banner." They gave him the banner of the left flank, which had been in the hands of the Banū ʿAbd al-Dār.

When the Messenger of God saw him, he told his companions, "Lower your gaze, and stand firm." Raising his hand, he said, "O God! If this tiny band is destroyed, you shall not be worshipped."

Then he fell into a momentary trance, sweat dripping down his face, then said, "This is Gabriel. He has come to you with one thousand angels in tow."

(6) In *al-Amālī*, it is related via a chain of narration from Imām Riḍā from his forefathers:

The Messenger of God travelled to Badr in the month of Ramaḍān and conquered Mecca in the month of Ramaḍān.

Author's comments: Biographers and historians concur. Al-Yaʿqūbī says in his *Tarīkh*: "The Battle of Badr was on Friday, when thirteen nights remained of the month of Ramadan, eighteen months after the Prophet came to Medina."

Al-Wāqidī says: "The Messenger of God halted at the wadi of Badr on Friday night, the seventeenth of Ramaḍān, and sent ʿAlī, al-Zubayr, Saʿd ibn Abī Waqāṣ, and Basbas ibn ʿAmr, to scout for water. They found the water-carriers of the Quraysh drawing water, and took some captive while others escaped. Then they brought the captives to the Prophet, who was standing in prayer. So the Muslims interrogated them, and the

captives said, "We are the water-carriers of the Quraysh. They sent us to bring water." The Muslims struck them, whereupon they said, "We belong to Abū Sufyān and are part of the caravan, and the caravan is at that sand dune." At that, the Muslims stayed their hands from them.

After completing his prayer, the Prophet said, "When told you the truth, you hit them; and when they lied to you, you left them!"

The next morning, the Messenger of God arranged the battle-lines and addressed the Muslims. After praising and glorifying God, he said, "I urge you towards what God urges you, and I forbid you from what God has forbidden. God is enormous in stature. He commands truly and rightly, loves truthfulness and sincerity, and rewards the good for their goodness, according to their stations before Him. Through Him, they are memorialized and distinguished. You have reached the station of truth; none of your acts will be accepted by God unless they are done seeking His countenance. Patience in places of trial is one of the things that evokes God's succor. Through patience, God shall relieve sorrow and distress, and shall rescue you in the Hereafter. The Prophet of God is among you, so mind that. He commands you, so let shame before God prevent Him from coming to know of anything from that would spark His hatred. For He says: *The hatred of Allah is worse than their hatred for each other* (40:10).

"Look to what He has commanded you in His book and how He will honor you after being abased. Take peace in that; your Lord shall be pleased with you. Your Lord shall try you in this land with something that shall necessitate that you receive His mercy and forgiveness which He promised you. For His promise is true, His word is true, and His recompense is severe.

"By God—the Living, the Upholding—you and I have taken shelter Him. We have sought refuge in Him, and we have put our trust in Him. To Him is our return. May God forgive me and the Muslims."

(7) In *Majmaᶜ al-Bayān*, it is related from a group of exegetes, such as Ibn ᶜAbbās, and others:

On the day of Badr, Gabriel said to the Prophet: "Take a fistful of dust and cast it towards them."

When the two parties met, the Messenger of God told ᶜAlī: "Give

me a fistful of the pebbles from the wadi." ʿAlī gave him a handful of dusty pebbles, and the Prophet threw them in the face of his opponents and said, "May their faces be drawn." The dust and pebbles went into the eyes, mouths, and noses of the idolaters—every single one of them. Then the faithful pursued them, fought them, and took them captive; this handful of dust and pebbles was the secret behind their victory.

(8) In *al-Amālī*, it is related that Ibn ʿAbbās said:
The Messenger of God stood over the fallen at Badr and said, "May God requite this group with evil. You took me as a liar although I was speaking the truth, and betrayed my trust." Then he turned towards Abū Jahl ibn Hishām and said, "This man is worse than the Pharaoh. For when the Pharaoh saw certain death, he declared the oneness of God, but when this man saw certain death, he invoked Lāt and ʿUzzā."

(9) In *al-Maghāzī*, al-Wāqidī says:
On the day of Badr, the Messenger of God ordered that a well be dug and that all the slain bodies of the enemies be cast into it except that of Umayyah ibn Khalaf, since he was quite plump, and, on that day, his body had distended. When they had tried to toss him in, his flesh had begun to separate from his body, and so the Prophet said, "Leave him." So they left the body and covered it with soil and stones instead.
Then he stood over the inhabitants of the well and called out to them, one by one, "Have you found what Your Lord promised you to be true? I have found what my Lord promised me to be true. How wretched you were to your prophet! You called him a liar while the people believed me, you expelled me while others sheltered me, and you fought me while others aided me."
They [the companions] said, "O Messenger of God, are you speaking to the dead?"
He said, "They have found that what their Lord has promised them is true."

Another narration reads:
The Messenger of God said, "You cannot hear what I say better than them, but they cannot respond."
Al-Wāqidī continues:
The Quraysh were defeated near noon. The Messenger of God stayed overnight at Badr. He ordered ʿAbd Allāh ibn Kaʿb to collect and carry the spoils of war, and he told some of his companions to help with that. Then, after praying the afternoon prayer at Badr, they set off, reaching al-Ithīl before sunset. They made camp there and slept. Some of his companions were wounded, although not too severely. He ordered Dhakwān ibn ʿAbd Qays to guard the Muslims; as night faded, they moved on.

(10) In a long narration in *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is related:
Abū Jahl emerged from the battle-lines and said, "O God! Muḥammad has cut ties with his kinfolk far more than we have, and he has brought us something we do not recognize. Destroy him in the morning!"
So God revealed to His Messenger: *If you demand a victory, victory has come to you. If you desist, it would be better for you. If you return, We shall return, and your forces shall avail you naught, no matter how many they are. And know that Allah is with the faithful* (8:19). Then the Messenger of God took a handful of gravel and threw it in the faces of the Quraysh, and said, "May their faces be drawn." Then God sent a wind striking the faces of the Quraysh; it heralded their defeat.
The Messenger of God said, "O God! Do not let the Pharaoh of this nation"—Abū Jahl ibn Hishām—"escape!" Seventy of the enemy were killed, and seventy were taken prisoner. ʿAmr ibn al-Jumūḥ faced down Abū Jahl and struck him on the thigh. Abū Jahl struck ʿAmr's hand and slashed through it, leaving it dangling by its skin. ʿAmr stomped on his hand and stood, severing his own hand from his body.
ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd says:
I turned to Abū Jahl, who was soaked in his own blood, and said,

"Praise be to God who has disgraced you."
Lifting his head, he said, "The slave, son of a slave-woman, is more wretched. Whom shall fate smile on? Woe betide you!"[1]
"God and His Messenger," I replied. "I shall kill you."
As I placed my foot on his neck, he said, "You have ascended a difficult ascent, you little shepherd. The worst thing that could happen to me is being killed by you today. Let one of ʿAbd al-Muṭallib's clan, or one of your allies, kill me instead."
I tore off his helmet and slew him, then brought his head to the Messenger of God. "O Messenger of God! Good news—this is the head of Abū Jahl ibn Hishām." He fell into prostration out of gratitude.

(11) In *al-Irshād* by al-Mufīd, it is related:
Then the Commander of the Faithful [Imām ʿAlī] came forward to fight al-ʿĀṣ ibn Saʿīd ibn al-ʿĀṣ after the others had shrunk away from him, and none was left to challenge him. Soon, the Commander of the Faithful had slain him. Next, Ḥanẓalah ibn Abī Sufyān challenged him, and was slain. Next, Ṭuʿaymah ibn ʿAdī challenged him, and was slain. Next, Nawfal ibn Khuwaylid—one of the devils (*shayāṭīn*) of the Quraysh—challenged him, and was slain. The Commander of the Faithful kept fighting them, one after another, until he had killed half of those who were killed. Seventy men were killed in all: the Muslims at Badr along with the three thousand striking angels had taken care of half of them, and the Commander of the Faithful had taken care of the other half alone.

(12) It also says in *al-Irshād*:
Sunni and Shiʿi narrators concur that the names of the idolaters whom the Commander of the Faithful vanquished at Badr are as follows; this is in agreement with what we have previously related:

1 In his early years, ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd is said to have been known as "Ibn Umm ʿAbd" (the son of the mother of the slave) since he was born from slave origins or otherwise low social origins. [Trans.]

- Al-Walīd ibn ʿUtbah. As we have already mentioned, he was brave and murderous; men feared him.
- Al-ʿĀṣ ibn Saʿīd. He was a fearsome man whom heroes trembled before. He was the one who had set ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb to flight. His story is well-known, and we shall relate it later.
- Ṭuʿaymah ʿAdī ibn Nawfal, one of the chiefs of the misguided.
- Nawfal ibn Khuwaylid, one of the idolaters who was fiercest in enmity towards the Messenger of God. They Quraysh used to look up to him, honor, and obey him. He was the one who had tied together Abū Bakr and Ṭalhah with a rope in Mecca before the emigration (*hijrah*) and tortured them day and night to find out about what they were doing. When the Messenger of God knew of his presence at Badr, he beseeched God to handle the matter. "O God, take care of Nawfal ibn Khuwaylid." Thus the Commander of the Faithful killed him.
- Zamʿah ibn al-Aswad.
- Al-Ḥarith ibn Zamʿah.
- Al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith ibn ʿAbd al-Dār.
- ʿUmayr ibn ʿUthmān ibn Kaʿb ibn Taym, the paternal uncle of
- Ṭalḥah ibn ʿUbayd Allāh.
- ʿUthmān and Mālik, the sons of ʿUbayd Allāh and the brothers of Ṭalḥah ibn ʿUbayd Allāh
- Masʿūd ibn Abī Umayyah ibn al-Mughīrah.
- Qays ibn al-Fākih ibn al-Mughirah.
- Ḥudhayfah ibn Abī Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Mughīrah.
- Abū Qays ibn al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah.
- Ḥanzalah ibn Abī Sufyān.
- ʿAmr ibn Makhzūm.
- Abū Mundhir ibn Abī Rifāʿah.
- Munabbih ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Sahmī.
- Al-ʿĀs ibn Munabbih.
- ʿAlqamah ibn Kaldah.
- Abū al-ʿĀs ibn Qays ibn ʿAdī.
- Muʿāwiyah ibn al-Mughīrah ibn Abū al-ʿĀṣ
- Lawdhān ibn Rabīʿah

- ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mundhir ibn Abī Rifāʿah
- Masʿūd ibn Umayyah ibn al-Mughīrah
- Ḥājib ibn al-Sāʾib ibn ʿUwaymir
- Aws ibn al-Mughīrah ibn Lawdhān
- Zayd ibn Mulīṣ
- ʿĀṣim ibn Abī ʿAwf
- Saʿīd ibn Wahb, an ally of the Banū ʿĀmir
- Muʿāwiyah ibn ʿĀmir ibn ʿAbd al-Qays
- ʿAbd Allāh ibn Jamīl ibn Zuhayr ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Asad
- Al-Sāʾib ibn Mālik
- Abū al-Ḥakam ibn al-Akhnas
- Hishām ibn Abī Umayyah ibn al-Mughīrah.

Those are thirty-five men, excluding those whom there is a disagreement about, as well as those whom the Commander of the Faithful slew along with others. They are more than half of the fallen at Badr, as we have mentioned.[1]

Author's comments: Other authors—such as in *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*—have said that, on the day of Badr, Imam ʿAlī killed twenty-seven men. Al-Wāqidī says that various narrators and reports agree about nine men whom he killed; there is disagreement about the others.

Probing deeply into the accounts, poetry, and reports of the Battle of Badr and what happened afterwards could make the reader suspect these discrepancies. However, al-Wāqidī relates from Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq that most of the fallen in the Battle of Badr were vanquished by ʿAlī.

Furthermore, al-Wāqidī relates from Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd that fifty-two of the idolaters fell during the Battle of Badr, and that, of those, twenty-four were vanquished by ʿAlī or by ʿAlī along with others.

Additionally, in *al-Irshād* and *Manāqib*, the following poetry is ascribed to Usayd ibn Abi Iyās, goading the idolaters of the Quraysh against ʿAlī:

At every gathering is a purpose confounding you,
A strong youngster who overwhelms experienced full-grown horses.
Your abundance comes from God! Do you not deny it?

1 Some editions of *Kitāb al-Irshād* list thirty-six men. [Trans.]

Perhaps the noble free man denies it and is shamed.
This is the son of Fāṭimah who has ruined you:
Slaughter and death with a single blow, not slashing about.
They gave him money to defer his blows—
The act of the servile, a transaction yielding no profit.
Where were the mature men? Where were all the chiefs
Amid these misfortunes? Where was the best of the valley (*al-abṭaḥ*)?
He destroyed them with violent death and blows which he struck
With his sword whose blade did not cease its strikes.

(13) In *al-Irshād*, it is narrated from Shuʿbah from Abū Isḥāq that Ḥārith ibn Muḍrib said:

I heard ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib say, "When we were there at Badr, our only horseman was Miqdād ibn al-Aswad. The night before the battle, everyone slept except the Messenger of God, who stood upright at the root of a tree, praying and invoking God until daybreak."

Author's comments: The narrations on the story of Badr are very many. We have sufficed ourselves with a few which clarify the meaning of the verses. God willing, further narrations shall be mentioned as part of the investigation into the meanings of the subsequent verses which allude to aspects of this account.

The Names of the Martyrs at Badr (may God be pleased with them)

In *Biḥār*, it is related from al-Wāqidī:

ʿAbd Allāh ibn Jaʿfar told me, "I asked al-Zuhrī, 'How many Muslims were martyred at the Battle of Badr?'"
He said, "Fourteen: six of the Muhājirīn, and eight of the Anṣār."
The narration continues with the following roster of the fallen:
From Banū al-Muṭṭalib ibn ʿAbd Manāf: ʿUbaydah ibn al-Ḥarith. He was killed by ʿUtbah. Another narration from al-Wāqidī says that Shaybah killed him and that the Prophet shrouded him in yellow cloth.
From Banū Zuhrah: ʿUmayr ibn Abī Waqāṣ He was killed by ʿAmr ibn ʿAbd Wadd, the horseman who was at the Battle of Aḥzāb.

ʿUmayr ibn ʿAbd Wadd, Dhū al-Shimālayn, an ally of the Banū Zuhrah. He was killed by Usāmah al-Jashmī.
From Banū ʿAdī: ʿĀqil ibn Abū al-Bakīr, one of their allies from the Banū Saʿd. He was killed by Mālik ibn Zuhayr.
Mihjaʿ, the freed-slave of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. He was killed by ʿĀmir ibn al-Ḥaḍramī. It is also said that Mihjaʿ was the first of the Muhājirūn to be martyred.
From Banū al-Ḥārith ibn Fihr: Ṣafwān ibn Bayḍāʾ. He was killed by Ṭuʿaymah ibn ʿAdī.
From the Anṣār, they were:
From Banū ʿAmr ibn ʿAwf: Mubashshir ibn ʿAbd al-Mundhir. He was killed by Abū Thawr.
Saʿd ibn Khaythamah. He was killed by ʿAmr ibn ʿAbd Wadd, although some say that he was killed by Ṭuʿaymah ibn ʿAdī.
From Banū ʿAdī ibn al-Najjār: Ḥārithah ibn Surāqah. He was shot by an arrow by Ḥannān ibn al-ʿIrqah; it struck his throat and killed him.
From Banū Mālik ibn al-Najjār: ʿAwf and Maʿūdh, the sons of ʿAfrāʾ. They were killed by Abū Jahl.
From Banū Salamah: ʿUmayr ibn al-Ḥammām ibn al-Jumūh. He was killed by Khālid ibn al-Aʿlam. Some say that he was the first of the Anṣār to be killed. It is also narrated that the first of the Anṣār to be killed was Ḥārithah ibn Surāqah.
From Banū Zarīq: Rāfiʿ ibn al-Muʿallā. He was killed by ʿIkrimah ibn Abū Jahl.
From Banū al-Ḥārithah ibn al-Khazraj: Yazīd ibn al-Ḥārith. He was killed by Nawfal ibn Muʿāwiyah.
It concludes:
All in all, they were eight of the Anṣār.
It is also related from Ibn ʿAbbās that Anasah, the freed-slave of the Prophet, was killed at Badr.
It is also related that Muʿādh ibn Māʿiṣ was wounded at Badr and died of his wounds in Medina.
It is also related that Ibn ʿUbayd ibn al-Sakan was wounded painfully, then died of his wounds.

Verses 15 to 29

This section outlines commands and prohibitions pertaining to Islamic jihad as relating to the story at hand. It urges reverence towards God and warns of transgressing against God and His Messenger, lest one incur divine wrath. It alludes to some of the happenings at the Battle of Badr, including God's gifts and assistance towards the believers.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا زَحْفًا فَلَا تُوَلُّوهُمُ الْأَدْبَارَ ﴿١٥﴾

(8:15) *O you who believe! When you meet* (laqītum) *the rejectors arrayed for battle* (zaḥfan)*, do not turn your backs* (tuwallūhum al-adbār) *to them.*

Laqītum comes from the word root *l-q-y*. It is conjugated as *laqiyā, yalqī* and *lāqī*, *yulāqī*; the verbal noun is *liqāʾ*. According to al-Rāghib in *Mufradāt al-Qurʾān*:

Liqāʾ means "to encounter" or "to come face-to-face with". It is used for a mutual encounter; that is, each side encounters the other. It takes a direct object and is conjugated as *laqiyahu, yalqāhu, liqāʾan*, *luqyan*, and *luqyatan*. It is also used to mean perceiving something with the senses, sight, or insight. God says: *You had wished for death before you met it (*talqawhu*)* (3:143) and *We have met (*laqaynā*) fatigue in our journey* (18:62).

"Meeting with God (*mulāqat Allah*)" is an expression for the Resurrection—reaching one's destination with Him, as in: *Know that you shall meet Him (*mulāqūhu) (2:223) and *Who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet (*mulāqū*) their Lord, and that they are to return to Him* (2:46).

Liqāʾ also means *mulāqāh* ("meeting"). God says: *Those who hope not to meet Us (*liqāʾanā*)* (10:7) and *Toiling towards your Lord, thereby meeting Him (*mulāqīhi*)* (84:6).

Majmaʿ al-Bayān says:

> Both *liqāʾ* and *ijtimāʿ* mean "meeting". However, *liqāʾ* denotes "meeting up close", whereas *ijtimāʿ* does not require that.

Therefore, the words *liqāʾ* and *ijtimāʿ* are not interchangeable.

It also says:

Zaḥf means "nearing, little by little". *Tazāḥuf* means "both sides approaching each other". It is conjugated as *zaḥafa, zaḥfan.* The expression "*azḥafat lil-qawm*" is used to mean "approaching with firm resolve to fight a group of people".

Al-Layth says:

A *zaḥf* is a contingent which swarms towards (*yazḥifūn*) the enemy in one fell swoop. Its plural is *zuḥūf*.

Tuwallūhum al-adbār means to put one's back to the enemy and turn one's face towards defeat; that is, to flee.

This verse is general. That is, it is not limited to specific individuals, situations, or battles. Although some exegetes aver that it applies specifically to the Battle of Badr, and, therefore, the prohibition against fleeing an advancing army only applies to the Battle of Badr, there are no grounds for this view. This is particularly the case since, as discussed above, the context of the verses indicates that they were revealed after the Battle of Badr, not during it, and that these verses finish up the chunk of verses beginning with *They ask you about the spoils of war. Say: The spoils of war belong to Allah and the Messenger…* (8:1). There is a bit more than can be said about this; we shall discuss it in the section on narrations, God willing.

وَمَنْ يُوَلِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ دُبُرَهُ إِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِقِتَالٍ أَوْ مُتَحَيِّزًا إِلَىٰ فِئَةٍ فَقَدْ بَاءَ
بِغَضَبٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٦﴾

(8:16) ***Whoever turns their backs to them on that day—unless it be a stratagem of battle*** **(mutaḥarrifan)** ***or to withdraw*** **(mutaḥayyizan ilā fiʾah)** ***to another company—shall earn*** **(bāʾa)** ***Allah's wrath. His abode shall be hell—an evil end!***

Mutaḥarrif means "angling away from what is centermost or upright". The related word *ḥarf* is used for the edges of a thing. Here, it denotes a fighter in the thick of battle who veers this way and that as part of an ambush. *Mutaḥayyiz* means "taking a place". A *fiʾah* is a group of people. *Mutaḥayyizᵃⁿ ilā fiʾah* denotes a fighter who avoids fighting the enemy alone by joining a contingent and fighting with them.

Bawāʾ means "returning to a place and staying there". For that reason, al-Rāghib says:

The original meaning of *bawāʾ* is for all of a place to be level, in contrast to *nabwah,* which means that all of the place is not at the same level.

Here, it means that, when they returned, they would have been accompanied by God's wrath.

Together, these two verses (8:15 and 8:16) mean: "O you who believe! When you meet the army of the rejectors, or they are advancing towards you for battle, do not flee! Anyone who flees—whensoever—shall return accompanied by the wrath of God. His true destination will be Hell; what an evil destination! An exception is those who withdraw from battle for the sake of a stratagem or to join another company; there is no harm in that."

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ ۚ وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ ۚ وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْهُ بَلَاءً حَسَنًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧﴾

(8:17) ***So you did not slay them; it was Allah who slew them. You did not throw; it was Allah who threw, so that He could try the faithful, a beautiful trial from Himself. Allah is hearing, knowing.***

Reflecting on this verse leaves no doubt that it is referring to the Battle of Badr. It refers to how the Prophet threw a handful of gravel at the enemy, and how the faithful won a rapid victory. The latter part of the verse—*so that He could try the faithful, a beautiful trial from Himself*—reminds them of God's blessings upon them and makes the true actor God, rather than them or the Prophet.

From all this, it can be deduced that the intent behind *So you did not slay them; it was Allah who slew them. You did not throw; it was Allah who threw* is to show that their victory at the Battle of Badr was not due to natural cause and effect. How could a puny band which—according to narrations—had but a horseman or two, a few pieces of armor, and a handful of swords vanquish a well-equipped army with horsemen, weaponry, fighters, provisions, and animals? The enemy far outnumbered them and outmatched them in strength and power. The enemy had the means to defeat them, and were ready to do so.

However, God sent down angels to make the believers firm and strike

terror into the hearts of the polytheists. He cast defeat onto the enemy through the handful of gravel that the Prophet threw at them. Thus the believers routed them, felling and capturing them. Thus their plots were foiled, they were silenced, and their bells ceased to toll.

Thus, one should attribute what happened—the victory at the hands of the faithful, as well as the handful of gravel that scattered their forces and cast defeat onto them—to God, not the faithful themselves.

By attributing these acts to God rather than to the conventional chain of cause and effect, the verse conveys divine care and oversight. This, however, does not mean that natural or known causes were not involved; that is, the faithful were actually fighting, and those who felled enemies did so themselves. Similarly, the Prophet himself threw the handful of gravel. There is no conflict between these two levels of cause and effect.

*So that He could try the faithful, a beautiful trial from Himself (*minhu*)*: The pronoun *-hu* in *minhu* comes across as referring to God. The sentence itself provides an explanation for what preceded it. Grammatically, it is appended to something left unstated which, if written, would mean approximately: "God enacted these things—including killing them and throwing that at them—for a greater good, known to Him, and in order to try the faithful in a good way, or to grant them the boon of the eradication of their enemies, uplifting the word of monotheism, and freeing them from need by granting them the spoils of war."

Allah is hearing, knowing: This, in truth, provides an explanation for *so that He could try the faithful*, meaning that God tried them because He hears their pleas and knows their condition. Thus, he gave them a beauteous trial.

The conjunction *fa-* at the beginning of the verse (*fa-lam taqtulūhum—So you did not slay them…*) links it to the contents of the previous verses, beginning with *[Remember] when you sought aid from your Lord* (8:9). These verses enumerate God's blessings upon them: God sent down the angels; aided them with the angels; cast drowsiness upon them; sent down rain; and revealed to the angels that they should assist them, set their feet firm, and terrify their opponents. After all this has been mentioned, this verse then begins with the conjunction *fa-* to sum it up as: *So you did not slay them; it was Allah who slew them….*

With this in mind, one can therefore say that verses 8:15-16 (*O you who believe! When you meet the rejectors arrayed for battle…*) are a stylistic interpolation, and relate back to: *"…Then strike above their necks and their every fingertip"* (8:12). Either that, or it relates to a similar meaning which is understood from the sentences altogether, and *So you did not slay them…* is connected to what comes before it.

Other possible views have been mentioned here with respect to the arrangement of these verses:

Although God commands them to fight in the previous verse, He then speaks of their victory over the polytheists as being due to divine aid, to remind them of God's blessing. This is the view of Abū Muslim.

After they were commanded to fight, some of them said, "I killed so-and-so" and "I did this-and-that". Therefore, this verse was revealed to admonish them so that they would not take pride in their deeds.

Possibly, it can also be said that the conjunction *fa-* in *So you did not slay them* acts solely to link the sentences together [with no other grammatical purpose, and does not denote causality].

However, the correct view is the one we mentioned first.

ذَٰلِكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُوهِنُ كَيْدِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

(8:18) *Thus it is and Allah* (dhālikum wa anna Allāh) *weakens the schemes of the rejectors.*

Majmaᶜ al-Bayān says:

> *Dhālikum* is in nominative case, as is *anna Allāh.* It means: "The matter is like that, and the matter is that Allah is that God is the one who weakens." A similar thing can be said for the usage of *dhālikum* here as can be said for its usage in the verse: *Taste this. The faithless shall have punishment in the fire* (8:14).[1] Those who say that *dhālikum* is the subject and *taste this* (fa-dhūqū) is its predicate are wrong, since a predicate cannot begin with the conjunction *fa-*. For instance, it is incorrect to say *Zayd fa-munṭaliq* ("Zayd is so he is freed") or *Zayd fa-aḍrib-hu* ("Zayd is so strike him") unless the pronoun *hādhā* is used. That is, one could say:

1 Both versus start with *dhālikum*. [Trans.]

Hādhā Zayd fa-aḍrib-hu ("This is Zayd, so strike him").

The verse means: It is as We said—[and, in short,] God weakens the plots of the rejectors.

إِنْ تَسْتَفْتِحُوا فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمُ الْفَتْحُ ۖ وَإِنْ تَنْتَهُوا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ تَعُودُوا نَعُدْ وَلَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْكُمْ فِئَتُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَوْ كَثُرَتْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

(8:19) ***If you demand victory, victory has come to you. If you desist, it would be better for you. If you return, We shall return, and your forces shall avail you naught, no matter how many they are. And know that Allah is with the faithful.***

Altogether, with its three parts following the same pattern (*if you demand…if you desist…if you return*), the context of this verse indicates that it is wholly addressed to the faithless, not the faithful. It has a sarcastic tone by switching the pronoun, which suits the expression *Allah weakens the schemes of the rejectors* (8:18).

It means: If you, idolaters, ask God to award victory in the conflict between you and the faithful, know that God has already awarded victory to the faithful. This happened on the day of Badr, when the truth was made manifest. The faithful had the upper hand over you. Now, you had ought to stop plotting against God and His Messenger. If you do not cease and desist, then God will also not cease or desist in weakening your plots. Your numbers will not avail you, though they be very many, just like they did not help you that time. God is with the faithful, and those whom God is with will never be vanquished.

This view lends support to what is narrated:

> On the day of Badr, when the two sides lined up for battle, Abū Jahl said, "O God! Muḥammad has cut ties with his kinfolk far more than we have, and he has brought us something we do not recognize. Grant us victory over him!"

In some narrations—and this fits better—in sources such as *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, it is related from Abū Ḥamzah that Abū Jahl said, "O God, our lord! Our religion is ancient, and Muḥammad's religion is newfangled.

Grant victory today to the followers of whichever religion pleases You more!"

Some exegetes do hold that this verse is addressed to the faithful. However, they deduce this from the contents of the verse in a manner which is not at all acceptable to someone of sound taste. We shall not belabor this point here; those who wish to acquaint themselves with their views can consult the relevant tomes.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

(8:20) ***O you who believe! Obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not turn away from him while you hear [him].***

From the context, it can be understood that the pronoun *him* in *from him* refers to the Prophet; that is, they should not turn away from the Prophet while they are listening to him present to them the true call along with the commands and prohibitions that will improve their worldly and otherworldly lives.

This exhortation pertains to the rules of war, although the wording is in general terms.

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

(8:21) ***Do not be like those who said "we hear"*** **(samiʿnā)**, ***but heard not*** **(lā yasmaʿūn).**

The meaning of this verse is clear. However, it should be said that this verse chides the polytheists for claiming that they were listening when they really weren't. A later verse also bespeaks of this: *When Our signs are recited to them, they say, "We have heard. If we pleased, we could say something similar"* (8:31). However, they were lying. Had they actually been listening, they would have responded positively. This is similar to the verse: *they have ears that hear not* (7:179). God says of those burning in hell: *And they said, "If only we had listened or understood, we would not be stationed in the fire!"* (67:10)

The first occurrence of the verb "hear" (*samiʿnā*) means for the actual sound of the voice of the person speaking the word of truth to arrive at their ears. The second occurrence of the verb "hear" (*yasmaʿūn*) refers to

actually listening to the word of truth—that is, yielding to what is heard.

Like the previous verse, in which the idolaters plead for victory, this verse is framed as an address to the idolaters. However, it is still part of the series of verses directed at the faithful. These verses convey the message that the word of faith shall always overcome the word of faithlessness, and that the invitation to truth shall overcome the invitation towards falsehood. Thus it addresses the party of truth—that is, the faithful—commanding them to obey God and the Messenger, and warning them from turning away from him after hearing the word of truth, lest they become like those who said "we hear" but heard not.

Possibly, this verse refers to a specific group of Meccans who professed belief in the Prophet. Although their hearts were free from doubt, they went out to war against the Prophet at Badr along with the idolaters. Therefore, they were afflicted by the same things that beset the idolaters from the Quraysh. As it says in a narration:

> A group of the Quraysh had accepted Islam in Mecca, but their fathers confined them there.[1] Thus, they marched out with the Quraysh on the day of Badr. They were Qays ibn al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah, ʿAlī ibn Umayyah ibn Khalaf, al-ʿĀṣ ibn Munabbih ibn al-Ḥajāj, al-Ḥārith ibn Zamʿah, and Qays ibn al-Fākah ibn al-Mughīrah. However, when they saw how few Muslims there were, they said, "The poor things! Their religion has duped them."

A few verses later, God refers to them:

When the hypocrites and the sick-hearted said, "Their religion has duped them..." (8:49)

Some might also put forward the view that *those who said "we hear" but heard not* are the Jews of Banū Qurayẓah and al-Naḍīr. However, this is unlikely.

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَلَوْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا لَأَسْمَعَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ أَسْمَعَهُمْ لَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

(8:22-23) ***The vilest of beasts before Allah are the deaf and dumb***

1 That is, they could not migrate to Medina with the Prophet. [Trans.]

bereft of understanding. Had Allah known of any good in them, He would have made them hear. But if He had made them hear, they would have turned away in rejection.

This condemns the faithless rejectors who were mentioned previously. This can be inferred from the context as well as the pronouns, both relative and personal, which denote sentient beings. With that in mind, the definite article *al-* in *al-ṣumm al-bukm* is the type of *al-* that attaches to a noun that was previously mentioned (*lām al-ʿahd al-dhikrī*). This understanding renders the meaning as follows: The worst creatures creeping and crawling on earth are those who are deaf and dumb and hence cannot understand since there is no way for the truth to enter their brains. They neither hear nor speak.

Then God says that He has tried them with deafness and muteness, such that they neither hear nor speak the word of truth. In short, He has forbidden them from the blessings of hearing and accepting. This is because God did not find any good in them; had He found inside them the capacity to accept the truth, He would not have blocked their ears and would have allowed them to accept it. However, had they heard, they still would have turned away from the truth.

From this, it can be understood that *good* (khayr) means having a good inner self, ready to accept the truth and confess to it in the heart. Furthermore, *if He had made them hear* means "if He had made them hear while that inner capacity was absent". Upon deep contemplation of the verse, you will realize that there is no basis for the possible objection that, had God allowed them to hear and accept the truth, goodness would have been found inside them, and they would have had no reason to turn away. This is because *if He had made them hear* is predicated on them not having any goodness inside themselves in the first place.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ ۖ
وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَأَنَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

(8:24) ***O you who believe! Answer the call of Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. Know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart, and that to Him***

you shall be gathered.

After He calls them by the expression *Obey Allah and His messenger…* (8:20)—to heed the true call and not turn away from it after hearing it, He now emphasizes it by telling them again to respond to the call of the Messenger by presenting the truth of the divine command, and the pillar on which his call rests—namely, enlivening the human being by taking him from the pits of destruction and extinction, and that his position in existence is such that God is closer to him than his own heart, and that he would be presented before God. Thus, they should be perspicuous—be firm in their resolve, determined to have a good end with God!

The Inner Human Nature (Fiṭrah)[1]

Life (*ḥayāh*) is the greatest thing which an existent could ever want. How could it be otherwise, when, without it, there is nothing left but non-existence? It brings with it senses, feelings, and free will, and these are the things that set a human being at ease. A human being perpetually shrinks away from ignorance, loss of freedom, and loss of free choice.

Similarly, like other existent beings, the human being is also supplied with what is necessary to look after his spiritual life, which is indeed the truest part of his existence. This is similar to how the human being has the other faculties necessary to survive and perpetuate. It is this spiritual capacity that identifies what is good and useful for him, and warns him away from the domain of evil and harm.

Since this divine guidance that leads the human species towards happiness and goodness and assigns it towards the benefits of its existence is a guidance embedded in his genesis and creation—and it is impossible for a mistake to occur in creation—it is inevitable and necessary for a person to achieve the happiness of his existence in a manner in which there is no doubt. Undoubtedly, all created species proceed to the good of its existence and the benefits of its person, without negligence in it in terms of their nature. However, confusion occurs in what happens in terms of the influence of other factors and counter-causes that affect it in a different way, in which something deviates from what is good for it to what is evil,

1 Heading added by translator. [Ed.]

and from what is beneficial for it to a harm which affects it. This is similar to how a heavy physical object naturally remains on the ground. However, if it is moved up off the ground to a certain height, this occurs due to a force which goes against its inherent nature. If that force disappears, it falls back to the ground. Of course, this will not happen if someone prevents it from moving upward and deviating from its natural position.

This is what the Qur'an reiterates: no knowledge or deed which brings happiness to the human life shall be kept from him; rather, his inner nature (*fiṭrah*) perceives the truth of beliefs and deeds. God says:

> *The inner nature* (fiṭrah) *which Allah has instilled in humans. There shall be no change in the creation of Allah. This is the upright religion.* (30:30)

> *Who creates, then makes complete, and Who makes [things] according to a measure, then guides [them], and Who brings forth herbage, then makes it dried up, dust-colored. We will make you recite so you shall not forget, except what Allah pleases. He knows the manifest and what is hidden. And We will make your way smooth to a state of ease. Therefore do remind; reminding does profit. He who fears will mind, and the most unfortunate one will avoid it.* (87:2-11)

> *By the soul and by What fashioned it, then inspired it with [discernment between] its virtues and its vices. Successful is one who purifies it, and defeated is one who lets it down.* (91:7-10)

Yes, possibly the human being can err—either in his beliefs or acts—and stray from the path of truth. However, this is not because of some malfunction in his inner nature or divine guidance which sent him astray and cast him into perdition. Rather, it because his intellect was heedless and forgot about that guidance. Instead, he followed his own desires as well as those things which the devils (*shayāṭīn*) made alluring to his eyes. God says:

> *They follow but guesswork and their own whims. Guidance has come to them from their Lord….* (53:23)

> *Have you seen the one who takes his own desires for his Allah? Allah lets him wander astray, knowingly.* (45:23)

These matters which the human inner nature calls to—both in knowledge and in acts—are necessary for a happy human life. It is the true life, which befits being called "life". The happy life necessarily follows these matters just as these matters necessitate life and entails it, and returns it back to its place if it weakens by what contradicts it and invalidates its growth.

If a human being deviates from the straight path that his inner nature has directed him and pushed him towards, he loses out on the prerequisites for a happy life—namely, beneficial knowledge and righteous acts. Instead, he clings to the shirttails of ignorance, corruption of his free will, and acts that are beneficial for the dead; nothing brings him life apart from true knowledge and true deeds. These are the two things that his inner nature calls him towards, and this is what God refers to in the verse we are discussing presently: *O you who believe! Answer the call of Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life*.

Commentary continues:

The *l-* in *to that which gives you life* (li-mā yuḥyīkum) means "towards"; this is a common usage. What the Messenger is calling towards is the true religion—that is, Islam, which the Qur'an explains as following the call of one's innate nature (*fiṭrah*) towards beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds.

The Concept of Life in the Qur'an[1]

When "life" is discussed in the Qur'an, it takes on more than the superficial, everyday meaning. That is, life is not just the thing which unravels upon death, and which entails sensations, actions, and free will—both among humans and, more or less, among non-humans of varying types in the animal kingdom. God says:

> *The life of this world is naught but games and entertainment; the hereafter is the true life, if they but knew!* (29:64)

This is bolstered by the fact that the human being can enjoy this life while only being concerned with delusional things; however, a more pressing goal of his existence and spiritual side lies behind the veil: the

1 Heading added by translator. [Ed.]

veil separating the worldly life from the true Reality, which is more fitting to be described as "life". God alludes to this when discussing the Day of Resurrection:

> *You were heedless of this before, but now the veil has been lifted for you. Today, your vision is as sharp as iron!* (50:22)

Therefore, the human being will experience another life, of higher prestige and value than this worldly life which God describes as "games and entertainment". This is the afterlife, wherein the veil shall be lifted. That life is neither games nor entertainment In that life, the human being can only walk with the light of faith and the spirit of worship, as in:

> *They are those for whom faith has been written in their hearts, and who have been aided by a spirit from Him.* (58:22)

> *Is the one who was dead, and then Allah gave him life and gave him a light to walk with among people like a similar person in the shadows, who cannot get out?* (6:122)

The afterlife is of greater status and stature than the worldly life, which beasts share with humans. This is clear from verses like:

> *And We aided him with the holy spirit.* (2:253)

> *Similarly, We revealed to you a spirt from Our command* (42:52).

Thus, the afterlife is the loftier of these two lives. We shall discuss this topic more in the appropriate place, God willing.

All in all, the human being has a type of true life which is nobler and more perfect than the worldly life which he can don, if he readies himself for it by ornamenting himself with religion and entering the throngs of the righteous friends of God (*al-awliyāʾ al-ṣāliḥīn*). This is similar to how he readies himself for the worldly life as a fetus.

Thus, this applies to the verse in question (*O you who believe! Answer the call of Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life*). He attires himself in the true call to Islam which brings human beings the true life, just as this life springs from Islam and produces beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds. Thus, this verse is similar in meaning to:

> *If someone does righteous deeds, be they male and female, while they are a believer, We shall cause them to live a goodly life and reward*

them for the best of what they did. (16:97)

Either this verse (by that, I mean *when he calls you that which gives you life*) is absolute, and encompasses all of the Prophetic call, which brings life to the hearts; *or* it speaks of parts of it which have this effect; *or* it speaks of its end results, which is to produce types of truly happy lives, like a happy life in the presence of God in the hereafter.

Exegetical views giving a single, specific meaning to *that which gives you life* in *when he calls you to that which gives you life* are unfounded. This is because there is no evidence in the verse to limit *that which give you life* to a specific thing; rather, it should be taken comprehensively. Some of these exegetical views are as follows:

(1) *That which give you life* is the call to jihad. They argue that based on the context of the revelation of the verse. However, from the foregoing, it is clear that this view is baseless, although jihad also brings life to their matter and strengthens the religion.

(2) It is the call to martyrdom in the way of God when fighting against the enemies. They argue on the grounds that God promises the martyrs life in the verse *and do not thing those who have been killed in the way of Allah are dead; rather, they are alive before their Lord, receiving sustenance* (3:169).

(3) It is when the Prophet calls them to faith, since faith enlivens hearts whereas faithlessness deadens them.

(4) It is when the Prophet calls them to the truth.

(5) It is when the Prophet calls them to the Qur'an and knowledge of religion, since knowledge is life, ignorance is death, and the Qur'an is light, life, and knowledge.

(6) It is when the Prophet calls them to Paradise, since Paradise is the eternal life and everlasting blessing.

True, each of these views is a situation which the verse may apply to. However, the verse itself—as we mentioned—is comprehensive, and there is no evidence to suggest that it only refers to any one of these specific situations.

Commentary continues:

Know that Allah intervenes* (yaḥūl) *between man and his heart, and that to Him you shall be gathered: *Yaḥūl* means "to intervene" or "to be

in the middle of". *Heart* (qalb) takes on its conventional meaning.

The heart is mentioned many times in the Qur'an as the human organ which perceives, or in which appear, the deductions of his inner emotions, such as love, hate, fear, hope, longing, and confusion. It is what sorts them out. It is what loves and hates, hopes and fears, wishes for things, and is happy and sad. It is, in truth, the human soul (*nafs*) which is moved by the inner powers (*quwā*) and inner emotions which it is equipped with.

The human being—like other created beings which populate the world—is a compound being, made up of an agglomeration of various capacities, powers (*quwā*), and innate tools which he possesses and may use to carry out the purposes behind his existence. All of those different dimensions and parts of the human being—though they be very many—are tied together into a single whole, and acts or refrains from acting, moves or is at rest as single unit.

However, since God is the creator of man and is the creator of each one of the parts of his existence and the differentiation of his powers and tools, he is the one who surrounds him and every one of the parts of his existence

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However, since God has created the human being, and has created each and every part of it, along with their varying capabilities, His knowledge encompasses each and every part of its existence and its subordinate. He possesses all of them in the truest sense, meaning that he can employ them however he wills, He disposes of it as He likes, and a person possesses whatever of it as He likes. Thus He is the intermediary between a human being and his body parts, and every single subordinate related to him. He stands between the human being and his heart, between the human being and his hearing, between the human being and his sight, between the human being and his body, and between him and his self. He employs them by creating them and uses them by giving human being domination over them however He wills, gives him whatever He wills, and keeps from Him whatever He wills.

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Other creatures are similar to the human being in that regard. They have an essence and things which obey that essence, with their own capabilities, effects, and actions. However, God has final authority over them all on an existential level. He is the true owner of their essence and its

subordinates and He is the one who has made them possess all that, and stands between them and their essence, between them and their limbs, between them and their capabilities, between them and their effects, and between them and their actions.

Thus, God stands as the intermediary between the human being and his heart. All that the human being owns or is linked to is closer to Him than anything else; as He says: *We are closer to Him than his jugular vein* (50:16).

This is alluded to in the verse: *Know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart, and that to Him you shall be gathered* (8:24). Because He is the owner of everything, including man, He is the real possessor, and there is no real owner other than him, thus He is closer to the human being than his own self and has dominion over the potentialities of the human self. Thus He is an intermediary between him and his parts or what is linked to him; contemplate this.

For that reason, this verse ends with *and that to Him you shall be gathered*. Upon the Resurrection, it shall become glaringly apparent that the one with true dominion is God alone, with no partner. Anyone else's apparent or purported authority shall be abolished in favor of the one true king, glorious be His praise. As God says:

> *Who holds dominion today? Allah, the One, the Overpowering.* (40:16)

> *The day when no soul will exert ownership over itself, and all matters will rest with Allah.* (82:19)

It is as if the verse is saying: Know that God is the true ruler over you and your hearts. He is closer to you than anything else. He shall gather you before Himself, and it shall become apparent that He is your true king and sultan. On that day, nothing shall avail you before Him.

The beginning and end of the verse—namely, between and *Answer the call of Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life*—are linked due to the fact that God stands between the human being and his heart. This plucks the roots of all excuses for not answering the call of God and His Messenger when he calls them to what will bring them life—that is to say, *tawḥīd*, which is the reality of the true

call. For since God is closer to the human being than all things, even his heart, which he uses to perceive the oneness of God before all things, He is more knowable to the human being than his heart which is his organ of perception and the way to understand Him.

Thus, he understands God alone, with no partner, as a deity, before comprehending that he has a heart or anything that he comprehends via his heart. While it may doubt or waver on some matters, it does not doubt that there is a single Lord over all things, and so it will never misguide anyone in identifying the true Word.

And this call, the call to truth, is to the Word of truth, the religion of *tawḥīd*, which brings life to those who respond to the call. Thus it is upon him to respond to the caller to God. He has no excuse to spurn it on the grounds that he doesn't know whether or not he is being called to the truth, or whether some of it is true and some of it isn't, or because he is perplexed by the varying approaches (*madhāhib*). This is because God is the clear truth, and nothing hides that. Anything that hides God is a presumption, whereas God is the closest thing to a human being. Even though a heart may be beset with disquiet or devilish insinuations, God still stands between the human being and the heart, which is a container. Thus, no way remains for a human being to be ignorant of God or to have doubt in His oneness.

Additionally, since God stands between a human being and his heart, He is nearer to him than his heart. Similarly, since God is nearer to him than his heart, His intervention is close than either of these two things. Since God is the nearest thing to the human heart, He knows better what is in it than the human being himself.

Therefore, when the human being is summoned to the call to truth, which enlivens him from the truth, it behooves him to answer this call with his heart just as he answers it with his tongue. He should not hide in his heart that which disagrees with what he utters with his tongue. That is hypocrisy, whereas God knows best what is in his heart. When He resurrects him, He shall inform him of the truth of his deeds and tell him of what crossed his heart. God says:

> *One the day when they shall be laid bare. Not a single thing concerning them shall be hidden from Allah.* (40:16)

Allah hides no words or events. (4:42)

Furthermore, since God intervenes between man and his heart, and He is the true owner of the heart in the truest sense, He can direct the heart wherever He wishes, and only after that does the human being have that ability. Therefore, when a human being experiences faith or doubt, hope or fear, tranquility or disquiet, and so forth, which may be attributed to him by choice or compulsion, he must first understand that this is God directing his heart to where He wills, since He is closer to it than anything else, whether He directs towards things which come across as benevolent, or not. That is, part of the divine tutelage is to direct the heart however He wills and to exert unhindered, uncensured power over the heart as part of how He exerts His decree. As He says:

Allah decrees, and none can contravene His decree. (13:41)

His is the decree and the praise; He has power over all things. (64:1)

It would be ignorance for a human being to rely only on what he finds in his heart with respect to faith in the truth or lack thereof, resolving to do good, or concern over goodness and piety. That is, it would be ignorant for him to see himself as the master of his heart. For the heart is held in the fingers of the Merciful, who turns it wheresoever He pleases. He is the true owner, in the truest sense; He encompasses it in the truest sense of the word. God says:

We turn their hearts and eyes, just as they did not have faith the first time. (6:110)

Therefore, it is necessary for a person to believe in the truth and resolve for good out of fear of God—that God might turn him from happiness towards misery, intervening in his heart in such a way that would cause devolution and deterioration. He should not consider himself secure from God's stratagems, for the only ones who consider themselves to be secure from God's stratagems are the losers.

Similarly, if a human being finds that his heart is not amenable towards the truth, or if he finds that his heart is not set upon goodness and right acts, he must hasten to respond to God and His Messenger in what they call him to that will enliven him. He should not be defeated any despair

or hopelessness which assaults him from his heart. For God intervenes between the human being and his heart. He has the power to rectify what is inside him and to direct His heart towards what is best for him, to enwrap him in divine succor and mercy. The matter rests with Him. God says:

None despair of Allah's succor except the rejecting folk. (12:87)

None despair of Allah's mercy except the astray. (15:56)

Thus, you can see that this verse is one of the most comprehensive verses of the Qur'an, and contains veritable divine truths on the topic of God's intervention with the human being. This topic cuts short the excuses of the rejectors and polytheists who disregard cognizance of God. It plucks out the weeds of hypocrisy from the root by turning the hypocrites' souls towards the status of their Lord—for He knows best what lies in their hearts. It presents a psycho-spiritual reality to the Muslims who are on the path of faith in God and His signs: they are not independent owners of their hearts, separate from their Lord in that regard. This understanding removes many a great vice from those who see themselves as independent masters over their own selves. Those who witness faith and reverence in their hearts will not be deceived, nor shall they suffer from despondence and despair over the One who encompasses their hearts; they shall not be assailed by whims or battered down by accidental material causes. Rather, sluggishness towards true faith and accepting the truth begets despondence and despair.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the clause *Know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart…* explains the clause *Answer the call of Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life* in every imaginable way.

It is also clear that the verse has a broader meaning than exegetes usually admit to. These are some of the views which limit the meaning of the verse:

Saying that God is closer to the heart than a person himself is similar to saying that God is closer to a person than his jugular vein (50:16); this is a heavy warning.

The heart is mentioned to show that no word or deed is hidden from God, since God is closer to the heart than the human being. Therefore,

whatever a person knows about his heart is also known to God.

God intervenes between a person and his ability to act upon his heart upon death. It is not possible for him to procrastinate until death and then right what went wrong by hastening to obey God due to this barrier. Therefore, this verse urges people to obey God before the great barrier of death descends.

God controls the vagaries of the heart as it shifts from one state to another. It is as if they fear fighting. Since God knows this, He will calm their fear and shift away their hearts from terrifying thoughts, for He moves the heart from one state to another.

A Shiʿi narration says that verse means that God prevents the human being from seeing truth as falsehood, or falsehood as truth. This shall be discussed in the section on narrations, God willing.

وَاتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً ۖ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢٥﴾

(8:25) *And fear sedition which may not smite* (lā tuṣībanna) *only those of you who are unjust. And know that Allah is severe in retribution.*

According to *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, this verse was recited as *la-tuṣībanna*[1] by Imām al-Sajjād, Imām al-Bāqir, Zayd ibn Thābit, Rabīʿ ibn Anas, Abū al-ʿĀliyah, with both the *l-* and *-n* for emphasis. That is, they recited it as "it shall truly smite!" instead of "it shall not smite", in which *lā* is a particle of negation, and which is the common recitation.[2]

Either way, this verse warns all the faithful of a calamity about to befall the wrongdoers among them. It is not warning the rejectors or the polytheists. It specifically pertains to the wrongdoers among the faithful. By warning the masses to guard against that, it shows that what one sector of society does impacts everyone else; the negative consequences will be

1 That is, as لتصيبن rather than لا تصيبن. [Trans.]

2 That is, in the common recitation, it takes the meaning of *which may not smite (*lā tuṣībna*) only those of you who are unjust*, whereas in the alternative recitation presented here, it takes the meaning of *which may smite only those of you who are unjust*. [Trans.]

borne by everyone. *Know that Allah is severe in retribution* warns all about the severity of the consequences. There is no textual evidence indicating that this warning pertains only to the worldly life or worldly misery, such as civil strife, violence, corruption, insecurity, or that sort of thing.

Therefore, it can necessarily be concluded that all the people must guard against sedition (*fitnah*), even if it arises only from a particular group. They must root it out and extinguish its flames as God has commanded them to—through preventing evil and commanding good.

This verse boils down to a warning to the Muslims: do not go easy on factionalism and partisanship which threaten their unity, which would split them and their united stance apart. They should not be victims of divide and conquer, lest crookedness overtake the word of Truth and the upright religion, which the Muslims share.

This sedition shall be led by a specific group of them—the wrongdoers; however, the effect of that shall be borne by everyone. They shall all face the threat of degradation, impoverishment, and all the ills which civil unrest begets. They will all be responsible before God, and God is severe in punishment.

God glosses over what precisely this sedition is. It is left unspecified, apart from the overall description that it centers on a group of the wrongdoers. However, *Allah is severe in requital* clarifies that it involves Muslims bickering with each other over something, and that all the Muslims actually know which side is in the right. A group will run wild, galloping forth from truth towards evil. There will then be no defense against tyranny and no end to distress.

This is not a commentary on any and every type of wrongdoing; rather, it refers specifically to that sort of wrongdoing which balloons from a small group of Muslims into the whole, and which all of the society must therefore guard against. It involves things such as rebelling against the true Islamic government, making common cause to destroy the clear provisions of the Qur'an and Sunnah, which is one of its rights.

In any case, civil strife did beset the core of Islam and shatter its unity, just the verse says. Factionalism rose, and strength faltered; might and bravery waned. Fighting arose. People were taken captive and plundered; honor was violated; the Book was abandoned, and the Sunnah was

forgotten. Like the Messenger said: "O Lord, my people have abandoned this book!"

One of the biggest disasters is that, since the Muslim *ummah* was warned about this, there is no way for them to escape divine torment due to their remissness towards God.

> *Whenever they try to flee the punishment… they shall return to it, and taste the burning torment.* (22:22)

One exegete has put forward the clever view that the verse warns the *ummah* about the consequences of factionalism; however, he confines the effects of that to the world realm. However, the verse speaks about punishment unilaterally; and *how could they [escape] from a far-off place [hell]?* (34:52)

The difference in meaning between the two readings: In the recitation of the family of the Prophet and Zayd—*la-tuṣībanna* instead of *lā tuṣībanna—la-* denotes an oath, and *-anna* is for emphasis. In this reading, the verse means: *O listeners (that is, O believers)! Fear sedition which—I swear—would smite the wrongdoers among you exclusively. Remember what happened before.*

Here, the word *exclusively* (khāṣṣatan) describes "sedition". The verse is addressed to "those who believe". We said previously that, in the Qur'an, the expression "those who believe" (*alladhīna āmanū*) is used as an honorific to denote those who accepted faith at the beginning of the Prophetic mission and assisted in spreading the Prophetic call, unless the context indicates otherwise. Then the verse mentions sedition at the core of Islam and concludes [in the next verse] by speaking about those who were present at Badr. In any case, the verse commands all the believers to beware sedition stirred up by a group, the evil consequences of which will be felt by all, as discussed above.

As for the common reading *lā tuṣībanna*: *lā* means "not", and *-anna* emphasizes "not" (as if to say, "absolutely will not!"). The expression *lā tuṣībanna* is not part of the series of commands. (That is, it does not say "beware…and do not".) Rather, it continues the phrasing of the verse. The construction here is similar to what is found in Sūrah al-Naml:

> *O ants! Enter your houses, so that Solomon will not smash you and your hordes.* (27:18)

Thus, it says first *beware of sedition* and then continues with *which may not smite only those of you who are unjust*; that is, the two clauses are connected in meaning.

Some grammarians have proffered that *lā tuṣībanna* is a command ("do not strike!") in response to the first command. In their view, it is as if it is saying: "Beware Zayd! Do not let him strike you." That is to say: "Beware Zayd! If you keep your guard up, he shall not strike you." Furthermore, there is no objection to the emphatic particle *-anna* being used in a predicate.

Other possible views:

The *lā* is superfluous (*zāʾidah*), so the clause means: Beware sedition that should strike you….

Lā tuṣībanna is really an expanded form of *la-tuṣībanna*; the *fatḥah* in *la* was expanded and gave rise to *alif*. The expansion of *alif* occurs frequently in poetry; for instance:

Fa-anta min al-ghawāʾil ḥīna tarmī
wa min dhamm al-rijāl bi-muntazāḥi
And so you, from disasters when they strike,
And from the blame of men, are far.

By *muntazāḥ* is meant *muntazaḥ*.

However, both of these views are unlikely, and neither befits God's Word. Furthermore, as you can see, they render the meaning the same as in the reading *la-tuṣībanna*.

As you can see, the verse advises Muslim society at large, as bolstered by the phrasing of the previous verse, which is also addressed to all the faithful: *O you who believe! Answer the call of Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life…* (8:24). Since the call of God is towards what brings life, it is also a call towards unity through the rope of God, the establishment of the religion, and avoiding factionalism. As God says:

Hold fast to the rope of Allah together, and do not factionalize (3:103).

Establish the religion, and do not disunite about it. (42:13)

This is My straight path, so follow it and do not follow the ways which

would cause division among you from His Way. (6:153)

This reinforces some of what was mentioned previous about *when He calls you to that which give you life* (8:24) and *Know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart* (8:24). The verse is contextualized, although its import is broader than that and can be taken independently of the context. A critical researcher will not have any trouble discerning that, and God is the guide.

وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ أَنْتُمْ قَلِيلٌ مُسْتَضْعَفُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَتَخَطَّفَكُمُ النَّاسُ فَآوَاكُمْ وَأَيَّدَكُمْ بِنَصْرِهِ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

(8:26) ***Remember when you were few, deemed weak*** **(mustaḍʿafūn)** ***in the land, fearing*** **(yatakhaṭṭafakum)** ***that people might snatch you away. He sheltered you*** **(fa-āwākum)** ***and strengthened you*** **(ayyadakum)** ***with His aid, and provided you with wholesome things, that you might be grateful.***

"Deeming something weak" (*mustaḍʿafūn*) means to make light of it. The verb *yatakhaṭṭafakum*—from the root *kh-ṭ-f*—means to snatch something away. The verb *āwākum* means to give a person shelter or a haven he can return to. *Ayyadakum* derives from the verbal noun *ayd* which means "strength".

The context indicates that *when you were few, deemed weak in the land* refers to the time before the migration when the Muslims were confined to Mecca, and they were few and weak, *fearing that people*—the Arab polytheists and the heroes of the Quraysh—*might snatch you away. He sheltered you*—in Medina—*and strengthened you with His aid*—the blessings that were showered upon them at Badr—*and provided you with wholesome things*—the spoils of war.

Although the verse specifically refers to the Emigrants, not the Helpers, it overall speaks to both the Emigrants and the Helpers, since they are a single community, united by one faith.

This is especially since divine aid and wholesome sustenance are things which relate to all. Although the verse is set in the context of the Battle of

Badr, on its own, it addresses all Muslims. The later Muslims inherited the victory of the early Muslims, who were few and fearful in Mecca, wary of the people. Thus God sheltered them in Medina, bolstered their numbers through the Anṣār, aided them at Badr and elsewhere, and granted them goodly sustenance, spoils of war and otherwise, so that they might be thankful.

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يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَخُونُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ وَتَخُونُوا أَمَانَاتِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

(8:27-28) ***O you who believe! Do not betray*** **(lā takhūnū)** ***Allah and the Messenger, nor knowingly betray your own trusts. Know that your possessions and your children are a test, and that with Allah is an immense reward.***

"Betrayal" (*takhūnū*, from *khiyānah*) is the antonym of "faithfulness" (*amānah*), which means to adhere to the provisions of a pact, inheritance, or something similar. Al-Rāghib says:

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Betrayal (*khiyānah*) and hypocrisy (*nifāq*) mean the same thing. However, *khiyānah* is used in matters of contracts and property (*ʿahd* and *amānah*), whereas *nifāq* is used for religious matters. However, they can be used interchangeably, insofar as *khiyānah* involves violating a right and secretly going against an agreement. The antonym of *khiyānah* is *amānah*.

One may say: "I betrayed a person" (*khintu fulān*^{an}) or "I betrayed the person's trust" (*khintu amānat fulān*). Similarly, God says: *Do not betray (*lā takhūnū*) Allah and His Messenger, nor betray (*takhūnū*) your trusts.*

Nor betray your trusts: It is possible that this is in the jussive (*majzūm*) and conjunct to the previous use of *betray* (takhūnū), meaning: "Do not betray your trusts." It could also be accusative (*manṣūb*) with an implied particle *an*, meaning: "That you betray your trusts." The second interpretation is reinforced by the following phrase: "knowingly" (*wa antum taʿlamūn*, lit. "while you know").

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Only intentional betrayal can be prohibited; one cannot prohibit betrayal committed in ignorance. Knowledge is one of the preconditions

of religious responsibility (*taklīf*). Therefore, on the surface, there does not seem to be any reason to specify that this is knowing betrayal, unless the phrase *knowingly* omits some implied words, and is taken to mean "while you know that it is betrayal". This is unlike what some exegetes say; some exegetes say that it means "while you know the evils of betrayal, the dire consequences, and how God has forbidden it." There is no evidence for this in the text or the context.

Therefore, the correct view is that this sentence means "that you betray your trusts". The entire phrase—*do not betray Allah and the Messenger, nor knowingly betray your own trusts*—is a single prohibition, prohibiting treachery towards God and His Messenger. This is exactly the same thing as betraying the trusts of the faithful themselves, since part of God's trusts lie in the people—for instance, the *sharīʿah* rulings, or the beauteous conduct (*sīrah*) of the Messenger. Then there are the trusts that people entrust to each other, such as wealth or secrets. And some trusts are shared jointly between God, the Messenger, and the faithful. These are matters which God enjoins, the Messenger carries out, and which benefit the people. They undergird society—for instance, political secrets or war plans; were they to be publicized, it would unsettle the religion and undermine the Islamic government, thereby violating the right of God and His Messenger, and ultimately harming the faithful.

Therefore, this type of treachery is a betrayal of God, the Messenger, and the faithful. Such a traitor betrays God and the Messenger, should he be aware that this betrayal is of himself and his faithful brethren. No rational person would betray his own self; since the God-given human intellect acknowledges the ugliness of betrayal, how could a person then betray himself?

Thus, the intended meaning behind *nor knowingly betray your own trusts*—and God knows best—is double-crossing God and His Messenger while knowing that these are also their own trusts which they are betraying. A rational person never betrays himself knowing that the harm will ultimately turn back to no one but himself. Therefore, ending the verse with *knowingly* is to provoke the rightful fidelity and the judgment of the inner self (*fiṭrah*), not to postulate one of the preconditions for religious responsibility.

It seems that some of the Muslims were publicizing some of the Prophet's decisions, which he had kept hidden from the polytheists, or spilling secrets. Thus, God spoke of this as "treachery" and forbade it, considering it to be treachery towards God, His Messenger, and the faithful.

This view is reinforced by the following verse: *know that your possessions and your children are a test*…, for the context indicates that the two verses relate to each other, rather than being independent. Together, the exhortation about their possessions and children, and the adjuration against treachery against God and His Messenger, indicate that some of them were letting the polytheists in on matters kept secret by the Messenger. They did this in an attempt to placate them out of fear, since they had left some of their wealth and children behind in Mecca after migrating to Medina. Thus, they told them about these things to try to gain favor with them, so that their wealth and children would be safe, or for similar reasons; for instance, in the case of Abū Lubābah with respect to the Banū Qurayẓah.

This view is also reinforced by what has been narrated with respect to why the verse was revealed. That is, Abū Sufyān left Mecca with a large amount of wealth. Gabriel informed the Prophet of his departure and indicated that he should go after him, but that this should be kept secret. However, someone wrote to him telling him of this. Thus, God revealed: *O you who believe! Do not betray* (lā takhūnū) *Allah and the Messenger, nor knowingly betray your own trusts* (8:27). There are also other narrations with respect to why the verse was revealed; they shall be discussed in the section on narrations, God willing.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢٩﴾

(8:29) ***O you who believe! If you revere Allah, Allah shall grant you a distinction*** **(furqān)*****, absolve your wrongs, and forgive you. And Allah is possessed of tremendous bounty.***

A *furqān* is something which distinguishes between one thing and another. The context and the fact that the *furqān* is mentioned as a succedent to having reverence (*taqwā*) indicates that this *furqān* distinguishes

between truth and falsehood, whether it be in matters of belief—that is to say, distinguishing between faith and rejection—guidance and misguidance, acts of obedience or disobedience, or anything that would please or displeases God. There is also the view that this *furqān* distinguishes between right and wrong. All of this is the fruit of the tree of reverence (*taqwā*). However, *furqān* is used unconditionally here. The previous sentences mentioned forms of good and evil, all of which require a *furqān* to be distinguished.

A verse which is similar in meaning is:

When someone is reverent towards Allah, Allah shall make a way out for them and grant them sustenance from whence they expect not. Allah suffices whoever trusts in Him. (65:2-3)

The meaning of "absolving wrongs" (*takfīr al-sayyiʾāt*) and "forgiveness" (*maghfirah*) has already been discussed. This verse acts as a summary of the commands and prohibitions outlined in the preceding verses. That is, if you are reverent towards God, you shall not be confused over things that are pleasing and displeasing towards God with respect to the matters that were mentioned. Furthermore, God shall absolve your misdeeds and forgive you; and God holds an enormous grace.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Kāfī*, it is related via a chain of narration from ʿAqīl al-Khuzāʿī that the Commander of the Faithful [Imām ʿAlī] said: Fear of warring against those who deserve it and those who band together to misguide others is itself a form of misguidance in religion, and a worldly loss, accompanied by humiliation and degradation. Those who flee advancing armies at the time of battle merit hellfire. God says: *O you who believe! When you meet the rejectors arrayed for battle, do not turns your backs to them.* (38:15)

(2) In *Man Lā Yaḥduruhu al-Faqīh* and *ʿIlal al-Sharāʾiʾ*, via a chain of narration from Ibn Shādhān, it is related that Imām Riḍā received a letter containing religious enquiries. In part of his reply, he wrote:

God forbade fleeing from the enemy army, for this weakens the

> religion, and disesteems the messengers and imams of justice. He has also forbidden you from abandoning them in the face of the enemy. Abandoning the call to affirm Lordship, manifest justice, leave tyranny, and destroy corruption merits punishment, for this emboldens enemies against the Muslims, and results in them being taken captive or killed, the abolition of the religion of God—Mighty and Glorious—and other forms of corruption.

Author's comments: Many narrations from the Imams of the household of the Prophet say that fleeing from battle is one of the greater sins which lands a person in hell. Some of these narrations have been mentioned in the discussion on the greater sins as part of the exegesis of this verse: *If you leave aside the greater [sins] which you are forbidden, We will do away with your small sins…* (4:31).

Furthermore, in many Sunni narrations, such as in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*, wherein Abū Hurayrah relates that the Prophet said: "Leave aside seven things which would beget hellfire." They [the Companions] asked: "What are they, O Messenger of God?" He said, "Associating partners with God, unjust killing, sorcery, consuming interest, consuming the property of an orphan, fleeing battle, and impugning chaste or careless married female believers." Other narrations from Ibn ʿAbbās and others treat fleeing from battle as one of the greater sins.

True, God says: *Now, Allah has lightened your burden for you. He knows that there is weakness in you. So if there are a hundred patients ones of you, they shall overcome two hundred…* (8:66). This verse puts a condition on the absolute prohibition of fleeing battle when their numbers in battle are one to less than three.

It is also related in Sunni narrations from ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar, Ibn ʿAbbās, Abū Hurayrah, Abū Saʿīd al-Khidrī, and others such as in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* that the prohibition of fleeing from battle in this verse was specifically for the day of Badr.

It could be justifiable to say that the verse was revealed on the day of Badr, and that the adverbial phrase *on that day* (yawmaʾidhin) in *whoever turns their backs to them on that day…* (8:16) refers to the day of Badr. However, as you have seen, the context of the verses bears witness to the fact that the verses were revealed after the day of Badr, and that *on that*

day was on a day of retreat, not the day of Badr.

However, even if one does assert that it was revealed on the day of Badr, that does restrict the injunctions of the verse to that day, just as the other verses are general in import even though a specific cause spurred their revelation.

The author of *Tafsīr al-Manār* says in this regard:

> "If this verse was revealed before the onset of battle—which goes against the majority of exegetes' views—then one could argue that it is for a specific case, since the Battle of Badr was unique in some ways. For instance, it was the first battle of Islam, and if the Muslims had been defeated, it would have caused a great crisis. Additionally, the Muslims were aided and made steadfast by the angels, and God promised to aid them and to cast fear into the hearts of the enemies.
>
> When we look at all of the details and contextual evidence regarding the prohibition, the fact that the prohibition coupled with the severe threat in the verse is specific to it is justified.
>
> I would add to that, that God tried the companions—may God be pleased with them—through fleeing and retreating in battle twice, while the Prophet was among them. Once was during the Battle of Uhud, about which God says:
>
> *Those of you who turned back on the day when the two armies met, only Satan sought to cause them to make a slip on account of some deeds they had done, and certainly Allah has pardoned them; surely Allah is Forgiving, Forbearing* (3:155).
>
> God also says on this subject:
>
> *Allah helped you in many battlefields and on the day of Ḥunayn, when your great numbers made you vain, but they availed you nothing and the earth became strait to you notwithstanding its spaciousness, then you turned back retreating. Then Allah sent down His tranquillity upon His Messenger and upon the believers, and sent down hosts which you did not see, and chastised those who disbelieved, and that is the reward of the unbelievers.* (9:25-26)
>
> These verses do not deny that fleeing in battle is impermissible or that it is one of the greater sins. However, it does not say that

anyone who flees battle—unless it is for one of the two exceptions mentioned in Sūrah al-Anfāl—incurs severe divine wrath, and their place shall be the hellfire; and what an evil place it is. Rather, it may be less than that; since it is restricted by a later verse which provides an exemption for weakness, and the verse which forbids people from casting themselves into destruction in general as is mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah and as shall soon be discussed.

(3) Aḥmad and the authors of the *sunan* works, apart from al-Nasāʾī, relate from Ibn ʿUmar:

I was on a battle-expedition with the Messenger of God in which the people fled. I was one of those who fled. We said, "What should we do since we have fled from battle and earned divine wrath?" Then we said, "What if we go back to Medina and stay overnight there?" Then we said, "What if we present ourselves to the Messenger of God? Either there will be a way to repent, or else we will leave."

So we came to him before the morning prayer. He came out and asked, "Who are the ones who fled?"

We said, "We are the ones who fled."

He said, "No, you are the ones who returned back; I am your contingent and the contingent of the Muslims."

We came forward and kissed his hand.

Abū Dāwūd relates it in the following words:

We said, "What if we enter Medina and stay overnight there, then leave with no one seeing us?"

Then we said, "What if we present ourselves to the Messenger of God? Either there will be way of repentance, and we shall do it; and if it is otherwise, we will leave."

So we sat before the Messenger of God before the dawn prayer, and when he finished, we stood before him and said, "We are the ones who fled…."

Some take this narration as an expansion of the meaning of *withdraw to another company* (8:16), in which case the threat loses its meaning and no ruling remains. Regarding it, al-Tirmidhī says:

> "It is ranked as an acceptable (*ḥasan*) narration. We only know it to come from Yazīd ibn Abī Ziyād."
> However, my view is that there are disagreements about it. Many have ranked it as a weak (*ḍaʿīf*) narration. Ibn Ḥibbān says:
> This narrator is honest. However, when he grew old, his memory faltered, at which point he began narrating wrong things. Therefore, only what he narrated before his memory began to deteriorate is sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*). In sum, this narration has no weight on this matter, neither in terms of its chain of narration nor in terms of its content. A narration with a similar meaning has been related from ʿUmar which is even more baseless, and should not be given consideration in this matter.

Author's comments: According to various angles and evidence, it is incorrect to say that the injunction not to flee battle was limited to the Battle of Badr. Evidence for this is as follows. First, the Battle of Badr was the first battle of Islam. Second, the Prophet was among them there. Other battles had similar conditions, such as Uḥud, Khandaq, Khaybar, and Ḥunayn; in those days, Islam was in desperate need of fighters who would stand firm against the enemy, while the Prophet was among them. God promised to aid them and sent down in some of them angels to assist them and cast fear into the hearts of the enemies.

As for what is said regarding the verses that descended regarding fleeing battle during the battles of Uḥud and Ḥunayn, there is no evidence in them implying that the threat in the verse of Al-Anfal does not include them. The verse is absolute and there is no evidence to restrict it.

It is astonishing that the author of *Tafsīr al-Manār* admits that fleeing battle on those two occasions was forbidden, but then says: "However, it does not say that anyone who flees battle—unless it is for one of the two exceptions mentioned in Sūrah al-Anfāl—incurs severe divine wrath, and their place shall be the hellfire; and what an evil place it is. Rather, it may be less than that." However, the major sins which merit hellfire are the forms of disobedience that God has promised hellfire for.

Even more astonishing is when he says: "Rather, it may be less than that; since it is restricted by a later verse which provides an exemption for weakness, and the verse which forbids people from casting themselves

into destruction in general". However, the exemption for fleeing is when a certain ratio of fighters to the enemy is no longer present.

If the verse forbidding people from casting themselves into destruction implies, in its general sense, anything more than permission of escape in times of weakness, then the verse of *anfāl* is rendered meaningless and no instance could be found for it. Similarly, if *withdraw to another company* (8:16), is interpreted according to what is reported from by Ibn ʿUmar, it requires canceling the verse as mentioned by the author of *al-Manār*. In short, there is no escape from taking the verse as general and unconditioned.

(4) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, regarding the verse *to withdraw to another company* (8:16), it is related from Imām al-Kāẓim:
Unless it be a stratagem of battle (8:16) means digressing with the intention to carry out an attack. *Or to withdraw to another company* (8:16) means that they retreat to their own contingents without withdrawing from the battle; whoever retreats beyond the line of his contingent *shall earn Allah's wrath* (8:16).

Author's comments: The narration indicates an important point in the wording of the verse—namely, "turning your back" can mean a number of things, not just being routed in battle. The two actions that are exempted—that is, turning away from fighting as part of a stratagem, or joining another contingent—do not pertain to flight and defeat. However, other forms of deserting battle are prohibited. Any form of flight from the enemies of the faith is prohibited unless they exceed twice their number.

(5) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, regarding the verse *you did not throw* (8:17), Ibn Shahrāshūb relates from Ibn ʿAbbās:[1]
The Prophet said to ʿAlī, "Give me a handful of pebbles."
He gave it to him, and then he cast them in the faces of the Quraysh; not a single one was left whose eyes were not filled with pebbles.

Author's comments: This is also related in *al-Durr al-Manthur* from

1 Ibn Shahrāshūb relates this from al-Thaʿlabī from Ḍaḥḥāk from ʿIkrimah from Ibn ʿAbbās. [Trans.]

al-Ṭabarānī, Abū al-Shaykh, and Ibn Mardawayh from Ibn ʿAbbās. It is also related by al-ʿAyyāshī in his explanation of the hadith of *munāwilah* from Muḥammad ibn Kulayb al Asadī, from his father, from Imām al Ṣādiq, and in another narration from ʿAlī.

(6) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn Jarīr relates that both Muḥammad ibn Qays and Muḥammad ibn Kaʿb—may God be pleased with them both—said:

When the two sides approached, the Messenger of God took a handful of dust and cast it into the faces of the people, saying, "Humbled be their faces." It entered all of their eyes. The Companions of the Messenger of God came forward to fight, and the enemy was defeated due to what the Messenger of God had thrown. Then God revealed: *You did not throw; it was Allah who threw, so that He could try the faithful through it a beautiful trial from Himself. Allah is hearing, knowing* (8:17).

Author's comments: When it says the verse was revealed then, it means that the verse was revealed later, but speaks of what happened at that time, not that it was actually revealed at that moment. This commonly occurs in narrations on the causes of revelation.

In his biography of the Prophet, Ibn Hishām says that the Prophet threw dust at them, then commanded the Companions to attack, and this was how they conquered them.

Ibn Hisham has mentioned in his biography that the Prophet pelted them with dust then commanded his companions to attack and that was their defeat.

(7) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Abī Shaybah, Aḥmad, al-Nasāʾī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh, Ibn Mandah, al-Ḥakim, and al-Bayhaqī (who considers it authentic in his *al-Dalāʾil*) from Ibn Shihāb from ʿAbdullāh ibn Thaʿlabah ibn Ṣaʿīr:

Abū Jahl faced the people and said, "O God! He has severed his ties with his kin and brought us something unknown. So obliterate him tomorrow!" This was his plea for victory. Then, the verse

was revealed: *If you demand a victory, victory has come to you. If you desist, it would be better for you. If you return, We shall return, and your forces shall avail you naught, no matter how many they are. And know that Allah is with the faithful* (8:19).

(8) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, regarding the verse *the vilest of beasts before Allah…*, Imām al-Bāqir said:
It refers to the Banū ʿAbd al-Dār. None of them accepted Islam except for Muṣʿab ibn ʿUmayr and one of their allies called Suwaybiṭ.

(9) In Jāmiʿ al-Jawāmiʿ, it is related that Imām al-Bāqir said:
They are the Banū ʿAbd al-Dār. None of them accepted Islam except Muṣʿab ibn ʿUmayr and Suwayd ibn Ḥarmalah. They used to say, "We are blind, deaf, and dumb towards what Muḥammad has brought." They all fought at Uḥud, in which they were the flag-bearers.

Author's comments: This is narrated in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, and something of similar meaning in related from Ibn ʿAbbas and Qatādah. The narration is of the type wherein a specific example is given of the verse, although the verse itself is general and not limited to that situation.

(10) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* says regarding *O you who believe! Answer the call of Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life* (8:24):
"Life" means "Paradise."

(11) *Al-Kāfī* relates from Abū al-Rabīʿ al-Shāmī, via its chain of narration:
I asked Abū ʿAbdillāh [Imām al-Ṣādiq] about the verse *O you who believe! Answer the call of Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life* (8:24).
He said, "It was revealed about allegiance towards and the authority of ʿAlī (*wilāyat ʿAlī*)."

Author's comments: This is narrated in *Tafsīr al-Burhān* from Ibn

Mardawayh, without a full chain of narration, from Imām Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Bāqīr. It is also related from Abū al-Jārūd from him, just as al-Qummī narrates it in his *Tafsīr*. This and the previous narration are examples of specific applications of the verse; as we have discussed in our exegesis, the import of the verse is general.

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(12) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, it is related from Abū al-Jārūd from Imām al-Bāqir regarding *know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart* (8:24):

It means that God stands between a person and a sin that would lead him to the Fire, and that God stands between the faithless and an act of obedience that would replenish their faith. Know that deeds are in accordance with their ends.

(13) In *al-Maḥāsin*, from a chain of narration from ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥakam, from Hishām ibn Sālim, it is related that Imām al-Ṣādiq said regarding *know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart* (8:24):

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He intervenes so that a person does not think falsehood is truth.

Author's comments: Al-Ṣadūq also relates this in *Maʿānī al-Akhbār* from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr from Hishām ibn Sālim from the Imām.

(14) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is related from Yūnus ibn ʿAmmār that Imām al-Ṣādiq said:

The heart will never affirm that truth is falsehood, or that falsehood is truth.

(15) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Mardawayh that Ibn ʿAbbās—may God be pleased with them—said:

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I asked the Prophet about the verse *Allah intervenes between man and his heart* (8:24).

He said, "He stands between the faithful and faithlessness (*kufr*), and between the faithless and guidance."

Author's comments: Something similar is related by Abū al-Jārūd from Imām al-Bāqir in *Maʿānī al-Akhbār*.

(16) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is related from Ḥamzah al-Ṭayyār from Imām al-Ṣādiq regarding the verse *Allah intervenes between man and his heart* (8:24):

While a person may desire something with his ears, eyes, tongue, or hand, he does not actually partake of it—even though he wants it—because his heart dislikes it and does not accept it, for he knows that it is not right.

Author's comments: Al-Barqī also relates this in *al-Maḥāsin* via a chain of narration from Ḥamzah al-Ṭayyār from Imām al-Ṣādiq. Something similar is also related by al-ʿAyyāshī in his *Tafsīr* from Jābir from Imām al-Bāqir. The meaning of this narration derives from the meaning of the previous two narrations (the one from Hishām ibn Sālim and the one from Yūnus ibn ʿAmmār, from Imām al-Ṣādiq).

(17) It is related in *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī* from al-Ṣayqal:

Imām al-Ṣādiq was asked about the verse: *And fear sedition which may not smite only those of you who are unjust* (8:25). He said: "I have been informed they were the people at the Battle of the Camel."

(18) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* says:

This was revealed about Ṭalḥah and Zubayr when they fought the Companion of the Faithful and wronged him.

(19) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, it is related from al-Ḥākim with a chain of narration from Qatādah from Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyib from Ibn ʿAbbās:

When the verse *And fear sedition…* (8:24) descended, the Prophet said, "Whoever wrongs ʿAlī—my successor after my death—is like someone who fought against my prophethood, and the prophethood of all the prophets before me."

(20) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Abī Shaybah, ʿAbd ibn Ḥamīd, Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād in *al-Fitan*, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh, and Ibn Mardawayh from al-Zubayr, may God be pleased with him:

For a long time, we used to recite this verse *And fear sedition which may not smite only those of you who are unjust* (8:25) without realizing that it was about us.

(21) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related about this verse from Ibn Jarīr and Abū al-Shaykh from al-Saddī:
This was revealed exclusively about those who participated in the Battle of Badr. They were struck at the Battle of the Camel, where they fought. Among those killed were Ṭalhah and Zubayr, both of whom were at the Battle of Badr.

(22) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Aḥmad, al-Bazzāz, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Mardawayh, and Ibn ʿAsākir from Maṭraf:
We said to Zubayr, "O Abā ʿAbdillah, you have laid the caliphate to waste[1] to the point where it has come to fighting. Now you come seeking revenge [for ʿUthmān]?"
Zubayr, may God be pleased with him, said, "During the time of the Prophet, Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān—may God be pleased with them—we recited the verse *And fear sedition which may not smite only those of you who are unjust* (8:25), but we never guessed that we would be among those people, until what happened among us happened."

(23) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related about this verse from ʿAbd ibn Ḥamīd and Abū al-Shaykh that Qatādah, may God be pleased with him, said:
By God, those Companions of the Prophet with perspicuity knew that there would be civil unrest.

(24) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Abū al-Shaykh, Abū Nuʿaym, al-Daylamī in *Musnad al-Firdawsī*, from Ibn ʿAbbās, may God be pleased with them, regarding the verse *Remember when you were few, deemed weak in the land, fearing that people*

1 A reference to his role in the assassination of the third caliph ʿUthmān. [Trans.]

might snatch you away… (8:26):

Someone asked, "O Messenger of God, who are those people?"

He said, "The Persians."

Author's comments: This narration does not fit the context of the verse.

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(25) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related regarding the verse *O you who believe! Do not betray Allah and the Messenger, nor knowingly betray your own trusts* (8:27) from Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Abū al-Shaykh from Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh, may God be pleased with him:

Abū Sufyān left Mecca, whereupon Gabriel came to the Prophet and said, "Abū Sufyān is in this-and-that place, so follow him and keep it secret."

However, one of the hypocrites wrote to Abū Sufyān that the Prophet was after him and advised him to be careful. Then God revealed: *O you who believe! Do not betray Allah and the Messenger, nor knowingly betray your own trusts…* (8:27).

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Author's comments: This narration is close to the exegesis of this verse which we mentioned already.

(26) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn Jarīr relates that al-Mughīrah ibn Shuʿbah said:

This verse was revealed about the assassination of ʿUthmān, may God be pleased with him.

Author's comments: This does not fit the context of the verse at all.

(27) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, it is related from Imām al-Bāqir, Imām al-Ṣādiq, al-Kalbī and al-Zuhrī:

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This was revealed about Abū Lubābah ibn ʿAbd al-Mundhir al-Anṣārī. The Messenger of God was besieging the Jews of Banū Qurayẓah, and it was the twenty-first night of the siege. They asked the Messenger of God to make a peace treaty, on the same conditions as it had been done with their brethren from Banū al-Naḍīr—that they would migrate to their brethren in Syria at

Adhraʿāt and Arīḥāt. However, the Messenger of God refused unless they agreed to accept arbitration by Saʿd ibn Maʿādh.

They said, "Send Abū Lubābah to us." They said this because he was amenable to them since his family, wealth, and children were among them.

So the Prophet sent him. They came to him and said, "What do you think, Abū Lubābah? Should we subject ourselves to the judgment of Saʿd ibn Maʿādh?"

Abū Lubābah gestured to his throat. That is, they would be slaughtered, and should not do that.

Then Gabriel came to the Prophet and told him what had happened.

Abū Lūbabah said, "By God, my feet had barely moved from their place when I realized that I had betrayed God and His Messenger." Then the verse was revealed about that.

After it was revealed, he tied himself to one of the pillars of the mosque and swore, "By God, I shall neither eat nor drink until I die, or until God forgives me." He remained there for seven days, neither eating nor drinking, until he fell unconscious. Then God forgave him, and someone told him, "Abū Lubāah, God has forgiven you."

He said, "No, by God, I shall not untie myself unless the Messenger of God himself unties me." Then he came to him and untied his hands, at which time, Abū Lubābah said, "To complete my penitence, I must forsake my people who caused me to sin and divest myself of my wealth."

The Prophet said, "It suffices for you to give a third of it in charity."

Author's comments: The story of Abū Lubābah and his penitence is authentic and acceptable as an application of the contents of these two verses. However, it happened long after the Battle of Badr, whereas these two verses and all of the previous verses come across as referring to a single situation which occurred shortly after the Battle of Badr.

Verses 30 to 40

These verses carry on from the previous verses. They are all linked to the previous verses and the verses at the beginning of the chapter, apart from verses 8:32-33 (*"O Allah, if this be the truth…"*), since these verses appear separate, as we shall discuss, God willing.

وَإِذْ يَمْكُرُ بِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيُثْبِتُوكَ أَوْ يَقْتُلُوكَ أَوْ يُخْرِجُوكَ ۚ
وَيَمْكُرُونَ وَيَمْكُرُ اللَّهُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

(8:30) ***[Remember] when those who rejected faith plotted against you*** **(yamkuru bika)*****, to capture you*** **(li-yuthbitūka)** ***or kill you or expel you. They plotted, and Allah plotted—and Allah is the best of plotters.***

Al-Rāghib says:

> *Makr* ("plot") means to divert someone from their aim through trickery. It has two [forms, senses]. It can be used in a positive sense; for instance, for a goodly effort, as in the verse *And Allah is the best of plotters* (8:30). It can also be negative sense; that is, for something reprehensible, as in the verse *And an evil plot does nothing but turn back on its plotters* (35:43).
>
> *When those who rejected faith plotted against you*: Look at how their plot turned out. It speaks of two things: they plotted, and We plotted. It has been said: "Part of God's 'plot' is granting a person respite and inundating them with worldly things. For that reason, the Commander of the Faithful—may God be pleased with him—said, 'Whenever someone's worldly situation is improved, while he does not know that he is being plotted against, that person has been deluded.'"

Majmaᶜ al-Bayān says:

> *Ithbāt* means "to confine" or "to imprison". One can say: "He shot him and 'imprisoned' him (*ramāhu fa-athbatahu*), meaning he pinned him down on the spot." *Athbatahu fī al-ḥarb* means to

severely wound someone in war.

The context requires that *when those who rejected faith plotted…* be linked to previous verses (*[Remember] when Allah promised you that one of the two companies would be yours…,* 8:7). Therefore, this verse is in the context of proclaiming the blessings God has showered upon them and how God has assisted them in ways that did not transpire from their own selves.

The verse means: Remember—or let them remember—when the Qurayshi faithless plotted to annihilate your call by besetting you with one of three things: imprisonment, assassination, or exile. They plotted, and God plotted—and God is the best plotter.

The vacillation between these three words—imprisonment, assassination, and exile—shows that they had taken council on how to handle the Prophet and snuff out the light of his call, thereby reinforcing narrations on why this verse was revealed which tell of their conniving at Dār al-Nadwah. This shall be discussed presently, in the section on narrations, God willing.

وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا قَالُوا قَدْ سَمِعْنَا لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَقُلْنَا مِثْلَ هَٰذَا ۙ إِنْ هَٰذَا
إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

(8:31) ***When Our signs are recited to them, they say, "We have heard. If we pleased, we could say something similar*** **(mithla hādhā).** ***This is nothing but the fables*** **(asāṭīr)** ***of the ancients."***

Asāṭīr (sing. *usṭūrah*) are tales; the word is usually used to refer to made-up fables. "*We have heard*", "*if we pleased*", and "*we could say something similar*" are all spoken by them [the Qurayshi faithless]. It says *mithla hādhā* rather than *mithla hādhihi* or *mithla-hā* to indicate that they are mocking the signs of God and the position of being a divine messenger. The same occurs in the next sentence.[1]

The verse means: When Our signs [the Qur'anic verses] are recited to them, they doubtlessly prove that they emerge from Us. They reveal

1 Namely, "*This is nothing but the fables of the ancients*," which also uses the pronoun *hādhā*. [Trans.]

that We will the true religion for them. However, they insist on attacking and belittling it. They say, "We have heard, and we understand—what you are saying is untrue; it is but an old fairy tale. If we wanted, we could say something similar. We just don't see the point in it; we have no interest in this kind of superstitious story."

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وَإِذْ قَالُوا اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كَانَ هَٰذَا هُوَ الْحَقَّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَأَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ أَوِ ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنْتَ فِيهِمْ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

(8:32-33) ***[Remember] when they said, "O Allah, if this be the truth from You, then rain down* (amṭir) *stones upon us from the sky, or bring us a painful punishment." But Allah will not chastise them while you are among them, nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness.***

Imṭār means to send down something from above. It is usually used for rain, or, metaphorically, for a deluge of other things, such as stones. In any case, when they say, *"Rain down stones upon us from the sky"*, the use of the word *sky* indicates that it is referring to a sign from the heavens –utter divine destruction.

Raining down stones is one form of punishment. But others remain, included in *or bring us a painful punishment*. *Punishment* is in the indefinite form, thereby left unspecified to encompass all other types of punishment. They are saying: "Rain down stones upon us from the heavens, or bring us a different kind of punishment that is painful." Raining down stones from the heavens is identified specifically, rather than being implied in the generality of *a painful punishment*, because it causes both bodily and spiritual pain, insofar as it humbles and humiliates.

"O Allah, if this be the truth from You: This indicates that what they used to hear from the Prophet explicitly or implicitly was the statement "this is *the truth* from God," which implies exclusivity. It would have been different if he had told them, "This is truth from God". The second statement is for those who do not believe in heavenly religion and divine prophecy, as the polytheists, who were pagans, used to say: *Allah has not*

sent down anything to any human (6:91). As for the first statement, the one who is confronted with it is the one who believes that there is a true religion from God and a divine message that conveys the truth from Him, but he denies that what the Prophet brought or some of what he brought is the truth from God. Both their claims are rejected by this statment. First, it asserts that it is a divinely revealed religion and that the Prophet is a divinely sent prophet proclaiming the truth from God. Then, while they deny some or all of what the prophet brought is the truth from God, this asserts that it is from God and no one else. After that, conditions are put forward (*"…then rain down stones upon us from the sky, or bring us a painful punishment"*).

Most likely, these words do not literally recount what one of the polytheists said but which would have reflected their joint view and would have been the sort of thing they would all have been fine with. Rather, it is as if they were uttered by an apostate—someone who had accepted Islam then left it—or by one of the People of the Book, who actually believed in a divinely revealed religion. You may ponder this.

This view is reinforced by the subsequent verse, which says: *But Allah will not chastise them while you are among them, nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness* (8:33). *But Allah will not chastise them while you are among them* means that God will not punish the Qurayshi faithless in Mecca before the Prophet migrates to Medina; that the presence of the Prophet among them is what is forestalling punishment. "Punishment" is something other than what would come from the Prophet's hand; that is, it does not involve battle or being taken as prisoners of war. This is similar to how God has described "punishment" previously:

> *Say: Do you await for us but one of two most excellent things? And we await for you that Allah will afflict you with punishment from Himself or by our hands. So wait; we too will wait with you.* (9:52)

"Punishment" is extinction through a sign from the heavens, just like in the times of the ancient prophets. God warns them of being wiped out in many verses, such as:

> *But if they turn aside, then say: "I have warned you of a scourge like the scourge of ʿĀd and Thamūd."* (41:13)

How else would it fit with the likes of warnings such as *Allah will not chastise them while you are among them*, if it did not mean punishing the Qurayshi faithless and Arab polytheists while the Prophet is in Mecca?

Possibly, it could be taken to mean punishing all the Arabs or the Muslim nation (*ummah*), with *while you are among them* meaning "while the Prophet is alive". That is, it would mean: "God will not punish this nation while you are alive, among them." The next clause—*nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness*—could be understood to reinforce that. That is, the verse asserts that the entire *ummah* will not be chastised. However, it does not rule out the possibility that some of them will be chastised. For instance, fighting is referred to as "punishment" (*ʿadhāb*) in previous verses. Similarly, it is related that God has punished some of them, such as Abū Lahab, and the ones who mocked the Prophet. With this in mind, the verse would not include those who say, *"O Allah, if this be the truth from You"* (8:32). Specifically, it would not include people whom narrations say are the ones who said this such as Abū Jahl (in *Ṣaḥīh al-Bukhārī*) or al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥarith ibn Kaladah (as in some other narrations). These two people merited punishment and met death at the Battle of Badr.[1] Therefore, in this interpretation, this verse would have no relationship with those people who said *"O Allah, if this be the truth from You…"* even though the verse is in the context of a statement and a reply.

It becomes more problematic when one considers what has been narrated regarding the reasons for revelation. For instance, it is said that *"O Allah, if this be the truth from You, then rain down stones upon us from the sky, or bring us a painful punishment"* (8:32) was revealed, followed by *One demanding, demanded the chastisement which must befall the faithless; there is none to avert it* (70:2).[2] This will be discussed later. Other narrations regarding the reasons of revelation will be discussed in the section on narrations, God willing.

One exegete has averred that, through examining the contents of the verse, one understands that God sent the Prophet Muḥammad as a mercy to the worlds and blessing for these people, not as retribution or

1 Whereas the verses say that God will not punish people as long as the Prophet is among them. [Trans.]

2 Rather than 8:32 being followed by 8:33. [Trans.]

punishment.

However, the problem with this is that the Prophet's being a mercy to the worlds does not necessitate that he neglect what is best for the faith and be silent in the face of oppression, especially given what he faced, the way the righteous were tormented, and the way that the worldly and religious order was turned topsy-turvy. God Himself says: *My mercy extends to all things* (7:156)—but this did not prevent divine wrath from befalling the ancients, as is mentioned in the Qur'an.

Although God uses the word "punishment" to refer to the battle and defeat of the Qurayshi faithless at Badr, this poses no contradiction to *And We have only sent you as a mercy to the worlds* (21:107). He also threatens the Muslim nation with unilateral punishment in Sūrah Yūnus—and Sūrah al-Anbiyāʾ, Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, Sūrah al-Rūm, Sūrah al-Maʿārij, and elsewhere. This does not conflict with the Prophet being a mercy to all the worlds, for who would object to punishment befalling a group uttering nonsense like *"O Allah, if this be the truth from You…"*? For mercy necessitates giving all their just due—which includes taking tyrants to task for their tyranny.

Nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness: Overtly, this is a negation in the future tense, as implied by *[will] chastise them* (muʿadhdhibahum). *While they are seeking forgiveness* presents itself as a continual matter and is an adverbial clause (*jumlah ḥāliyyah*). It means: God shall not bring punishment to them as long as they continually seek forgiveness from Him.

However the verse is understood, it does not actually mesh with the situation of the Meccan polytheists, who were stubborn and unyielding to truth, and who were not going to seek forgiveness for their crimes. The situation is not improved by the narrations telling that those who said this regretted it and then sought forgiveness from God by saying, "Your pardon, O God!"

Apart from the fact that the reliability of this account is not established, God does not heed pleas for forgiveness from those who associate partners with Him, especially their ringleaders. Their seeking forgiveness would have no effect. Otherwise, it would render null and void their audacity in saying, *"O Allah, if this be the truth from You, then then rain down stones upon us from the sky.…"* (8:32). No grounds would remain to condemn

or admonish them in these verses, whereas the verses do appear in the context of condemning them for their violations against the Prophet and the faithful.

Furthermore, two verses later, God says, *Why shouldn't Allah punish them, when they are barring [people] from the Sacred Mosque…* (8:34). This does not fit with the view that these two verses dispense with the idea of punishment, for the most apparent meaning of the verse is that "punishment" is specifically restricted to battle—that is, that would be meted out through the hands of the faithful—as does the next verse, which says: *So taste the punishment for what you used to deny* (8:35). At that point, if the ones who were saying, *"O Allah, if this be the truth…"* were the Qurayshi polytheists—all of them or some of them—this would mean than "punishment" was a celestial punishment. This, in turn, would not agree with the verses speaking of "punishment" through battle and similar. If this verse is taken as emphatic, it would mean that they would have been more deserving of being punished, especially since they have committed other offenses such as barring people from the Sacred Mosque. However, this sort of sophistry would be better applied to argue that they would be punished, not that they would be exonerated from punishment.

If "not being punished" were taken to mean that they will not endure battle or similar things, then there would be a more evident clash between these verses:

Why shouldn't Allah punish them… (8:34)

So taste the punishment for what you used to deny. (8:35)

But Allah will not chastise them… (8:33)

Possibly, some exegetes understood the verse to mean this with the idea that *But Allah will not chastise them while you are among them* (8:33) meant that God would not punish them before the migration to Medina, whereas *nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness* (8:33) meant that God would not punish humanity as a whole after the *hijrah*, insofar as a group maintains faith and seeks forgiveness. For that reason, some argue that the first part of this verse was revealed before the migration to Medina, and the second part afterwards!

However, this view falters, since there was a group of believers in

Mecca with the Prophet seeking forgiveness, even before the migration. Similarly, after the migration, the Prophet was still among the people. Therefore, there is no reason to divide the verse in half.

Suppose one takes these two verses to mean that (a) God will not punish the Muslim nation (*ummah*) as long as the Prophet remains among them, due to the blessings of his existence, (b) God will not punish the Muslim nation after him due to the blessings of their seeking forgiveness from God, and (c) "punishment" means obliteration. There would then be a disagreement between these two verses and *what [excuse] have they that Allah should not punish them*….

From the lengthy discussion above, it is clear that these two verses (*[Remember] when they said, "O Allah, if this be the truth from You"… But Allah will not punish them...*, 8:32-33) do not share in the previous and subsequent verses that are mentioned in the discussion on the faithless among the Quraysh in the same context, and they were not revealed with them.

It is more likely that the dialogue in this verse (*But Allah will not chastise them while you are among them…*) is not about the polytheists. Rather, it is about the People of the Book, or some of those who accepted Islam, then recanted.

Some narrations reinforce this view. That is, they say that that the speaker here was al-Ḥārith ibn al-Nuʿmān al-Fihrī. We quoted this narration from *Tafsīr al-Thaʿlabī* and *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* in the discussion about the end of this verse:

> *O Messenger! Convey what has been sent to you from your Lord…* (5:67).[1]

With that understanding in mind, when it says they will not be punished, it means that, unlike previous nations, the Muslim nation will not be wiped out by punishment from the heavens. God will not punish the Muslim nation as long as the Prophet is alive, among them, or, after him, as long as they seek forgiveness from God.

The verse *But Allah will not chastise them while you are among them, nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness* is included

1 See volume 6 of the Arabic edition. [Trans.]

among verses which portend chastisement for the Muslim nation—for instance, the verses about the future of this nation, beginning with *And every nation had a messenger; so when their messenger came, the matter was decided between them with justice and they shall not be dealt with unjustly* (10:46). This foretells that, eventually, this nation will cease seeking forgiveness from God. The faithful shall no longer be among them, and then punishment shall descend.

وَمَا لَهُمْ أَلَّا يُعَذِّبَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَمَا كَانُوا
أَوْلِيَاءَهُ ۚ إِنْ أَوْلِيَاؤُهُ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقُونَ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

(8:34) ***Why shouldn't Allah punish them*** **(wa mā lahum allā yuʿadhdhibuhum Allāh)*****, when they are barring [people] from the Sacred Mosque, while they are not its guardians. Only the reverent may be its guardians; however, most of them do not know.***

This question conveys astonishment and disavowal. Either the phrase *wa mā lahum* is governed by an elided verb, with *allā yuʿadhdhibuhum* as its object, or it is an example of poetic license (*taḍmīn*) in the phrasing, as in the grammatical construction of *Would you purify yourself* (hal laka ilā an tazakkā) (79:18)?

In any case, it essentially means: "It has been established. This is what they deserve. Why shouldn't God punish them when they are barring people from the Sacred Mosque and keeping the faithful from entering it, while they aren't its guardians?"

When they are barring is an adverbial clause describing the pronoun suffix *them* in *punish them*. *While they are not its guardians* is an adverbial clause describing the pronoun *they* in *they are barring*.

Only the reverent may be its guardians: This elaborates upon *while they are not its guardians*, meaning that it is not for them to take it upon themselves to oversee the House such that they may allow whoever they wish to enter but not others, since this House was founded upon reverence to God. Therefore no one may have authority over it unless they are reverent—and that is not them.

Only the reverent may be its guardians is a subject-predicate sentence explaining what has been said, with an obvious implied command. It is not

a conditional sentence implying that the reverent may have guardianship; this is evinced by the next clause, which says: *however, most of them do not know*.

"Punishment" here either means killing or something more general, according to the context and the way the verse is linked with the succeeding verses. It has already been mentioned that the verse does not come across as being linked to what precedes it, and that verses 8:31-32 (*When Our signs are recited to them… "bring us a painful punishment"*) are outside the context of the overall flow of verses. Evidence for this has already been mentioned.

Majmaʿ al-Bayān says:

> Some might ask how it is possible to reconcile between these two verses and the beginning, since one part denies that they will be punished and the other affirms it.
>
> The answer has three parts. Firstly, the first mention of punishment refers to annihilation, as was done to the ancient, whereas the second mention of punishment refers to being killed by the sword, taken captive, or similar things after the faithful are no longer among them. Secondly, it means to ask: why shouldn't God punish them *in the hereafter*, whereas the first part is referring to punishment in this world. This is from al-Jubbāʾī. Third, the first mention is a way of encouraging seeking forgiveness.
>
> It means that they shall not be punished in this world or in the hereafter as long as they seek forgiveness and turn towards God. Should they not do that, then they shall be punished. Then it explains that they deserve punishment for barring people from the Sacred House.

A brief response: However, a problem with this view is that it is built upon the assumption that the verse is linked with what comes before it, whereas, as we have discussed, it is not linked.

A more detailed response: With respect to the first point, the context of the first verse is severe, as we discussed. Therefore, it does not fit with this to say that they will not be punished, while it then says they will be punished, even if it is some other sort of punishment.

Second, the context of the verse shows that what is meant is not

punishment in the hereafter. This is especially clear when looking at the third verse—which is in the same context of the first verse—and which says: *So taste the punishment for what you used to deny* (8:35).

Third, this clearly opposes the overt meaning of the verse, insofar as the verse establishes that they should seek forgiveness continually, and encourages them to continue that. This much is clear.

وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمْ عِنْدَ الْبَيْتِ إِلَّا مُكَاءً وَتَصْدِيَةً ۚ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

(8:35) *Their prayer at the House is nothing but whistling* (mukāʾan) *and clapping* (taṣdiyatan). *So taste the punishment for what you used to deny.*

Mukāʾ means "whistling." A *mukkāʾ* (the greater hoopoe-lark or *Alaemon alaudipes*) is a very whistly bird that lives in the Hijaz, as mentioned in the proverb: "give your children the desert-lark's share and give me the greater hoopoe-larks' share" (*banīki ḥammirī wa makkikīnī*).[1]

Taṣdiyah means "clapping the hands against each other."

Their prayer: "They" refers to the people who bar others from the Sacred House, as mentioned in the previous verse; that is, the Qurayshi polytheists. *So taste the punishment for what you used to deny* pronounces impending punishment for them, as indicated by the conjunction *fa-* at the beginning of the clause.

This reinforces the view that the two verses are linked together as a single statement. Verse 8:35, which begins with *mā kānā*, is an adverbial clause (*jumlah ḥāliyyah*), meaning: "Why shouldn't God punish them while they are barring God's faithful servants from the Sacred House, and while their prayer at the House is nothing but playing about, with clapping and whistling? If it be such, then let them taste the punishment for what they used to deny." The shift from third person to the second person plural in *taste the punishment* emphasizes the severity of the statement.

1 The proverb is used for a situation where a person should divide things equally between people, but instead gives one person a lion's share, since the desert-lark is bigger than the greater hoopoe-lark. It refers to a story of a woman dividing dates between her children and husband in a time of hunger. [Trans.]

From these two verses, it can be deduced that if the Sacred House is left empty due to being barred, it will bring about some sort of divine punishment. In part of his last testament, ʿAlī said: "By God, by God, [look after] the House of your Lord. If it is abandoned, you shall not be looked to."

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ لِيَصُدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَسَيُنْفِقُونَهَا ثُمَّ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً ثُمَّ يُغْلَبُونَ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ يُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

(8:36) ***Those who reject faith spend their wealth to hinder people from the way of Allah. They will spend it, then regret, then be overcome; and those who reject faith shall be gathered in hell***

This describes the situation of those who reject faith and how their efforts to wipe out the call to God and those who tread the path of God will go awry. This is further explained by *they will spend it, then regret, then be overcome*….

In this context, it is clear that *those who reject faith shall be gathered in hell* acts as an explanation. It means that rejecting faith shall impel them to strive to destroy the divine call and to bar people from the path of truth, let alone lead them to oppression and wickedness—and no form of wickedness can bring success or salvation. This is in accordance with Allah's natural law (*sunnah*) built upon cause and effect. They shall spend their wealth for these corrupt goals, and they shall waste their wealth in these aims, which will make them regret. Then they shall be overcome. They shall not benefit from it. And that is what will make the faithless gather in hell. The cause will be what they did in this world: gathering to promote evil and marching out to fight God and His Messenger will make them march towards hellfire on the Day of Resurrection.

They will spend it, then regret, then be overcome…: This verse is one of the prophecies in the Qur'an. This verse in Sūrah al-Anfāl was revealed after the Battle of Badr. It seems to allude to what will happen at the Battle of Uḥud or elsewhere. With this in mind, *they will spend it, then regret* refers to the Battle of Uḥud, or another encounter. *Then be overcome* refers to the conquest of Mecca. *Those who reject faith shall be gathered in hell*

refers to those who shall never embrace Islam.

لِيَمِيزَ اللَّهُ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ وَيَجْعَلَ الْخَبِيثَ بَعْضَهُ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ
فَيَرْكُمَهُ جَمِيعًا فَيَجْعَلَهُ فِي جَهَنَّمَ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

(8:37) *So that Allah can separate* (yumayyizu) *the impure* (khabīth) *from the good* (ṭayyib)*, and put the impure, some atop another, and pile it up together* (fa-yarkumahu)*, then cast it into hell; it is they who are the losers.*

Khabīth is the antonym (opposite) of *ṭayyib*. These two words have already been discussed. *Yumayyizu* means to separate a thing from its opposite and place it with its own kind. *Rakm* (yarkumahu) means to pile one thing atop another. For instance, clouds are *markūm* ("piled"), meaning that they are heaped on top of each other. *Tarākum* ("buildup", "accumulation") means to overlay, superimpose, or stack up things.

This verse explains what was said in the previous verse about the situation of the faithless; that is, they are subject to the laws of creation. Namely, they are impelled to struggle with all their might to extinguish the light of God and block others from the way of God. However, their struggles are in vain. Thus, they exhaust their money and efforts in that cause. Their wealth, efforts, and deeds go to waste, leaving them regretful and defeated.

It is so, because their wanton acts are subject to the divine law (*sunnah*) which executes the divine will throughout the created universe: namely, through the order flowing throughout creation, God distinguishes the evil from the good, the wicked from the righteous. Then, the wicked shall be heaped atop each other and tossed into hell, which is the end of the line for the caravan of evil. They shall all end up there, in that wasteland, just as the good and the righteous shall end up in the Garden: losers and winners.

From this, it is clear that *so that Allah can separate the impure from the good* is similar in import to the verses in which God gives a parable about truth and falsehood:

He sends down water from the sky. Then watercourses flow according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam, and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of making ornaments or

an apparatus arises a scum like it. Thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood. Then the scum passes away as a worthless thing, what profits the people tarries in the earth. (13:17)

This verse indicates the universal divine law that every branch springs from its root.

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قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ يَنْتَهُوا يُغْفَرْ لَهُمْ مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ وَإِنْ يَعُودُوا فَقَدْ مَضَتْ سُنَّتُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

(8:38) ***Tell those who reject faith that if they desist*** **(yantahū)*****, their past*** **(mā qad salafa)** ***shall be forgiven; and if they return—then the wont*** **(sunnah)** ***of those of old has already passed.***

Yantahū means "to stop doing something because it is disallowed". *Salafa* means "what has preceded". *Sunnah* means "path" or "way".

The Prophet is commanded to pronounce this to them. It can either hearten or frighten them. In essence, he is telling them that if they cease fighting and sedition, God will forgive them for how they fought and tormented the faithful. However, if they do not stop doing what they have been forbidden to do, then they must beware what happened to the ancients: they were utterly destroyed, their efforts laid waste.

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وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّىٰ لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ ۚ فَإِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَوْلَاكُمْ ۚ نِعْمَ الْمَوْلَىٰ وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ ﴿٤٠﴾

(8:39-40) ***Fight them until there is no more strife*** **(fitnah)*****, and religion is entirely for Allah. However, if they desist—Allah sees what they do. And if they turn back, then know that Allah is your guardian: the most superb guardian and the most superb helper.***

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These two verses outline the responsibilities of the faithful, just as the responsibilities of the faithless were outlined in the previous verse.

These two verses mean: Tell them that if they stop menacing God and His Messenger, God will forgive them their past. However, if they go

back to what they were doing, they should mind what happened to those before them. Tell them this. But as for you and the faithful—do not lose morale in your efforts to establish the faith and a healthy environment for the faithful. Fight them until their daily assaults ceases and are no more. If they stop, then God will recompense them for what He sees of their deeds. But if they then resume fighting, then also resume fighting. Know that God is the best Guardian; do not fear or sorrow.

Fitnah means "a thing which tries and pains a person". It is usually used for fighting, insecurity, and violating peace treaties. Before the migration to Medina, the Qurayshi faithless used to apprehend those who believed in the Prophet, torture them, and try to force them to leave Islam. This even continued in Mecca for some time after the migration, and is what is meant here by *fitnah*.

From the context, it is clear that *fight them until there is no more strife* is a figure of speech meaning "weaken them by fighting until their faithlessness no longer deludes them, until they stop assaulting the faithful and religion entirely is for God, with no one calling towards anything opposing Him."

However, if they desist—Allah sees what they do: Meaning, if they stop fighting. Similarly, it also says *Allah sees what they do*—meaning that when God passes His decree regarding them because He witnesses their actions.

If they turn back…: Meaning, that if they go back to what they were forbidden from—that is, they do not cut out their fighting and strife—then know that God is your guardian and helper. Fight them, certain of God's aid, for He is the best guardian and helper.

And religion is entirely for Allah: There is no conflict between this verse, and the People of the Book professing their faith, as long as they enter under the protection (*dhimmah*) of the Muslims and pay the *jizyah*. Therefore, there is no reason to consider this verse and *until they pay the jizyah by hand while they are subjugated* (9:29) to be an example of abrogation in the Qur'an.

Some exegetes have put forward other views on the meaning of "desist" (*intihāʾ*), "forgiveness" (*maghfirah*), and other terms in these three verses; however, there is not much benefit in mentioning them, so we have left them out here.

According to some narrations, *the most superb guardian* (niʿm al-mawlā) and *the most superb helper* (niʿm al-naṣīr) are two of the beautiful Names of God. Here, "name" does not mean an ordinary noun [since this grammatical construction is not a noun].[1] This is similar to what was narrated about *neither sleep nor slumber overtakes Him* (2:255) and the beautiful Names.[2] This was discussed in the exegesis of the end of verse 7:180—*and to Allah belong the beautiful Names*.[3]

Examining Narrations

(1) According to *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, *[Remember] when those who*

1 In Arabic, *ism* means both "name" and "noun". In his exegesis of 7:180, ʿAllāmah also says that "one may question whether *any* of God's names is purely a proper name" (p. 236 of the English edition). [Trans.]

2 The narration being referred to is as follows: Imam al-Ṣādiq said: "God has created a name that is not pronounced through letters, that is not uttered by words, that is not embodied in a person, that is not described by any analogy, and that is not colored by any color. Sides and locations do not apply to it; definitions are far from it; and the senses of all thinkers are veiled from it. It is covered without having a covering. He made it a complete word based on four concomitant parts that none precedes the others. He manifested three of them due to His creatures' need of them, and He veiled one of them which is the name that is concealed and reserved. So these are the names that have appeared. These manifest names are *Allāh*, *Tabāraka* (He is Blessed) and *Taʿālā* (He is Exalted). God has subordinated four pillars for each of these names, making twelve pillars [in total]. He created thirty names for each pillar, as actions that are attributable to that [pillar]. He is (1) *al-Raḥmān*, (2) *al-Raḥīm*, (3) *al-Malik*, (4) *al-Quddūs*, (5) *al-Khāliq*, (6) *al-Bāriʾ*, (7) *al-Muṣawwir*, (8) *al-Ḥayy*, (9) *al-Qayyūm*, (10) *Lā taʾkhudhuhu sinah wa lā nawm* (no nap or sleep overtakes Him), (11) *al-ʿAlīm*, (12) *al-Khabīr*, (13) *al-Samīʿ*, (14) *al-Ḥakīm*, (15) *al-ʿAzīz*, (16) *al-Jabbār*, (17) *al-Mutakabbir*, (18) *al-ʿAlī*, (19) *al-ʿAẓīm*, (20) *al-Muqtadir*, (21) *al-Qādir*, (22) *al-Salām*, (23) *al-Muʾmin*, (24) *al-Muhaymin*, (25) *al-Bāriʾ*, (26) *al-Munshiʾ*, (27) *al-Badīʿ*, (28) *al-Rafīʿ*, (29) *al-Jalīl*, (30) *al-Karīm*, (31) *al-Rāziq*, (32) *al-Muḥyī*, (33) *al-Mumīt*, (34) *al-Bāʿith*, (35) *al-Wārith*…." Regarding this narration, ʿAllāmah notes that some of the divine names in this hadith are verbs and phrases, not nouns. Thus they are not "names" (that is, nouns) in the linguistic sense but in the sense that they denote God's essence from the angle of a particular quality. (See pp. 271-274 of the English edition.) [Trans.]

3 This section of the exegesis appears in the eighth volume of the Arabic edition. [Trans.]

rejected faith plotted against you… (8:30) was revealed in Mecca before the migration.

(2) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, regarding *[Remember] when those who rejected faith plotted against you…* (8:30), Ibn Jarīr and Abū al-Shaykh relate from Ibn Jurayḥ, may God be pleased with him:

This was revealed in Mecca.

Author's comments: This is also conveyed in a narration from ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd from Muʿawiyah ibn Qurrah. However, you have already seen, the context of the verses does not support this view.

(3) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, regarding *[Remember] when those who rejected faith plotted against you…* (8:30), ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Aḥmad, ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd, Ibn Mundhir, al-Ṭabarānī, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh, Abū Nuʿaym in *al-Dalāʾil*, and al-Khaṭīb relate from Ibn ʿAbbās, may God be pleased with them both:

One night, the Quraysh took council in Mecca.

Some of them said, "When morning comes, seize him and fetter him." By "him", they meant the Prophet.

Others said, "No, kill him."

Others said, "No, expel him."

God informed his Prophet about that, and so ʿAlī—may God be pleased with him—slept in the Prophet's bed, while the Prophet left and travelled until he reached a cave. The polytheists spent the night eagerly guarding ʿAlī—may God be pleased with him—thinking he was the Prophet. When morning dawned, they stormed in on him. But when they saw it was ʿAlī—may God be pleased with him—and that God had foiled their plot, they demanded, "Where is your companion?"

He said, "I don't know."

They tracked his footsteps until they came to a mountain, whereupon they got mixed up. So they climbed the mountain and saw a spiderweb at [the cave's] mouth. They said, "If he had gone in, there wouldn't be a spiderweb here." So he remained there for three nights.

(4) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* says:

This verse was revealed when the Prophet proclaimed his call in Mecca, and the Aws and the Khazraj tribes came to him. The Messenger of God said to them, "Are you ready to defend me and be my neighbors, so I can recite the Book of God for you, and God shall reward you with Paradise?"

They said, "Yes. Make any conditions you want for your Lord and yourself."

He said, "Meet us at ʿAqabah at night halfway through the days of *tashrīq* [that is, on the night of 12 Dhū al-Ḥijjah]."

After performing pilgrimage to the Kaʿbah, they left for Minā. Many men were among them. When it was the second day of *tashrīq*, the Messenger of God said to them, "After nightfall, come to the house of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib in al-ʿAqabah. Be careful not to wake anyone, and come stealthily, one by one."

Seventy men from the Aws and the Khazraj came to the house. The Messenger of God said to them, "Will you defend me and be my neighbor, so I can recite the Book of my Lord for You, and God will reward you with Paradise?"

Asʿad ibn Zurārah, al-Barāʾ ibn Maʿrūr, and ʿAbd Allah ibn Ḥarām said, "Yes, O Messenger of God! Put whatever conditions for you and your Lord that you please."

He replied, "The condition I am placing for my Lord is that you worship Him and do not associate any partners with Him whatsoever. The condition I place for myself is that you defend me the same way you would defend yourselves, and that you defend my family the same way you would defend your families and children."

They said, "What will we receive in return?"

He said, "In the hereafter, Paradise. In this world, you shall be kings of the Arabs, and the non-Arabs shall flock to your religion. And you shall be kings in Paradise."

They said, "We agree."

He said, "Send me twelve of your chiefs to bear witness for you, just like Moses took oaths from twelve chiefs of the Israelites,

whom Gabriel specified"

They said, "This chief, and that chief," until they named nine of the Khazraj and three of the Aws. From the Khazraj, they were Asʿad ibn Zurārah, al-Barāʾ ibn Maʿrūr, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ḥarām (the father of Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh), Rāfiʿ ibn Mālik, Saʿd ibn ʿUbādah, al-Mundhir ibn ʿUmar, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Rawāḥah, Saʿd ibn Rabīʿ, and ʿUbādah ibn Ṣāmit. From the Aws, they were Abū al-Haytham ibn al-Tayyihān, who was from Yemen; Usayd ibn Ḥaṣīn; and Saʿd ibn Khaythamah.

After they had gathered and paid allegiance to the Messenger of God, Iblīs screeched, "O Quraysh! O Arabs! This Muḥammad and his hooligans from Yathrib are at the pillar (*jamrah*) of ʿAqabah paying allegiance to him to fight you." His voice reached all the people of Minā, and the Quraysh marched forth with their weapons.

The Messenger of God also heard the cry and told the Anṣār, "Disperse."

They said, "O Messenger of God, if you command us to greet them with our swords, we will."

The Messenger of God said, "I have not been commanded to do that, and God has not given me permission to fight them."

They said, "Will you come with us?"

He said, "I will await the command of God."

Weapons in hand, the Quraysh swarmed the area. Ḥamzah and the Commander of the Faithful took their swords and met them at ʿAqabah. When the Quraysh saw them, they said, "What are you two doing here—what is this gathering for?"

Ḥamzah said, "There isn't any gathering. No one else is here. By God, if anyone tries to pass through ʿAqabah, I will strike him with my sword."

So they returned to Mecca and said, "We do not think he is going to cause any harm to us or that any of the chieftains of the Quraysh would join the religion of Muḥammad."

Then they took counsel at Dār al-Nadwah. No one was allowed to enter Dār al-Nadwah unless he was at least forty years old.

Forty heads of the Quraysh assembled there, and Iblīs came in the form of an old man.
The door-guard asked him, "Who are you?"
He said, "I am a shaykh from the people of Najd. I have never held back from giving you the correct view. When I heard that you had gathered to discuss this man, I came to share in your counsel."
The gateman said, "Enter," so Iblīs went in.
After they had taken their seats, Abū Jahl said, "O Quraysh! None of the Arabs are more esteemed than us. We are God's folk. Twice a year, the Arabs come to us and honour us. While we are in the God's sanctuary, no one could connive against us. It has always been like this—until that Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh popped up among us. We used to call him 'the trustworthy' because he was a do-gooder—peaceable and honest-tongued—until what happened, happened. We honored him—but he claimed to be a messenger of God and that news came to him from the heavens. He discredited our beliefs, mocked our gods, ruined our youth, divided our flocks, and swore that our ancestors who had died were in Hell. Nothing more atrocious could have befallen us. This is my view."
They said, "What is your view?"
He [someone else] said, "I think that we should send one of our men to infiltrate his ranks and wipe him out. Then, if the Banū Hāshim demand blood-money from us, we will give them ten times the amount.
The despicable one [Iblīs] said, "What a wretched idea!"
They asked, "Why?"
He said, "Because, doubtlessly, anyone who kills Muḥammad will be slain. Which of you is going to sacrifice yourself to kill him? If anyone kills Muḥammad, the Banū Hāshim will band together with their allies from the Khuzāʿah and not rest while the killer of Muḥammad still walks the earth. War will break out among you, in your sanctuary, and you will be wiped out."
Someone else said, "I have another idea."
He said, "And what is it?"

He said, "Let's imprison him in a house and cast him some morsels until death takes him, like how [the poets] Zuhayr, Nābighah, and Imruʾ al-Qays died."
Iblīs said, "This is an even worse idea."
They said, "Why?"
He said, "Banū Hāshim will never allow that. When one of the travel-seasons comes when the Arabs come to Mecca, they will ask them for help, and, altogether, they will break Muḥammad out of prison."
Someone else said, "No, let's just expel him from our lands and devote ourselves to worshipping our gods.
Iblis said, "This is even worse than the other two ideas."
They asked, "Why?"
He said, "Because you're plotting against the most silver-tongued, handsome, smooth-spoken man. If you drop him off in the desert valleys of the Arabs, he will bewitch them with his tongue. Then they will take you unaware, with horses and men."
They remained perplexed for a while. Then they asked Iblīs, "What do you advise, O shaykh?"
He said, "I only have one view."
They said, "What is it?"
He said, "Take a man from each clan of the Quraysh, including Banū Hāshim. Arm each man with a knife, an iron rod, or a sword. Then, let them swoop down on him and strike him in one fell blow, so that his blood is split among all the Quraysh, and the Banū Hāshim cannot seek vengeance. Thus, you will all have shared in the deed. If they petition for blood-money, give it three-fold."
"Yes—even ten-fold," they said. "This is a good idea, O shaykh from Najd."
Thus, they resolved upon that, and Abū Lahab, the uncle of the Prophet, joined them [as the man from Banū Hāshim].
Then, Gabriel descended to the Messenger of God and informed him that the Quraysh had conspired against him at Dār al-Nadwah, whereupon God revealed: *[Remember] when those who*

rejected faith plotted against you, to capture you or kill you or expel you. They plotted, and Allah plotted—and Allah is the best of plotters (8:30).

The Quraysh decided to come upon him at night and kill him, so they made for the sanctuary, whistling, clapping, and traipsing around it, whereupon God revealed *Their prayer at the House is nothing but whistling and clapping* (8:35). This verse is linked by a conjunction to verse 8:30, although it was recorded after many other verses.

When night fell, the Quraysh neared the Prophet's abode. Abū Lahab said, "I won't let you burst in on him at night. There are women or children inside, and we can't be sure that they won't be hit accidentally. Let's guard him all night, and, at morning, we can swarm him." So they slept, surrounding the Prophet's chamber, but the Prophet had told ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib to put his life on the line and sleep in his place instead.

ʿAlī had said, "Yes, O Messenger of Good."

The Prophet had told him, "Sleep on my bed, and cover yourself with my cloak."

So ʿAlī slept on the Prophet's bed, wrapped up in the Prophet's cloak.

Then, Gabriel came. Taking the Messenger of God by the hand, he led him away from the Quraysh while they were sleeping, while [the Prophet was] reciting over them: "*And We set before them and behind them a barrier, and have covered them so they do not see*" (36:9). Gabriel told him, "Take the road to Thawr"—which is a mountain on the way to Minā with a hump shaped like a bull (*thawr*). So he entered the cave, and what happened, happened.

When the Quraysh awoke, they burst into the chamber, making for the Prophet's bed. Leaping up into their faces, ʿAlī said, "What do you mean by this?"

"Where is Muḥammad?" they demanded.

"Have you made me his keeper?" ʿAlī said. "Didn't you say you were going to kick him out of your lands? He's gone."

They rounded on Abū Lahab, beating him. "You deceived us last

night!" they accused him.

Then they dispersed into the mountains. Among them was a skilled tracker from the Khuzāʿah tribe called Abū Karz. "Abū Karz," they told him, "today is your day." So he led them to the mouth of the Prophet's cave. He told them, "This is Muḥammad's footprint. By God, this is the same footprint that is in the sanctuary."[1]

[That night], Abū Bakr had met the Prophet, so the Prophet had taken him with him [to the cave]. Abū Karz said, "This is either Ibn Abī Quḥāfah's [Abū Bakr's] footprint, or his father's. Someone else's footprint is also here." Then he led them to the cave, and said, "They haven't passed beyond this spot. Either they have ascended to the heavens, or they have disappeared into the earth." For God had sent a spider to weave its web over the mouth of the cave. Then some angels came in the form of horsemen and said, "No one's in this cave." So they dispersed, and thus God turned them away from His messenger. After that, God allowed the Prophet to migrate to Medina.

Author's comments: An abridged version of similar meaning is related in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* from Ibn Isḥāq, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Ḥātim, Abū Nuʿaym, and al-Bayhaqī altogether in *al-Dalāʾil* from Ibn ʿAbbās. However, in it, Abū Jahl says what the old man from Najd says here. Then it says that from the old man from Najd supported Abū Jahl's view, and the group agreed to follow it.

Many Sunni and Shiʿi narrations relate that Iblīs came to them at Dār al-Nadwah in the guise of an old man from Najd.

With respect to what Abū Karaz said—that this is Muḥammad's footprint, this is Abū Bakr's footprint, and this is someone else's footprint—narrations relate that the third person was Hind ibn Abū Hālah, the stepson of the Messenger of God whose mother was Khadījah bint Khuwaylid, may God be pleased with her.

(5) Shaykh [al-Ṭūsī] relates in his *Amālī* with a chain of narration

1 That is, the footprint was the same as Abraham's footprint at Maqām Ibrāhīm. [Trans.]

from Abū ʿUbaydah ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir, from his father and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abī Rāfiʿ, altogether from ʿĀmmār ibn Yāsir and Abū Rāfiʿ, and from Sinān ibn Abī Sinān, from Ibn Hind ibn Abī Hālah. The narrations from ʿAmmār, Abū Rāfiʿ, and Hind have intermingled. It is a long hadith on the migration of the Prophet. An excerpt says:

The Messenger of God had Abū Bakr ibn Abī Quḥāfah and Hind ibn Abi Hālah follow him. He told them to sit and wait for him at a specific place on the way to the cave. The Messenger of God then remained [in his house] with ʿAlī and told him to wait until after they had prayed the evening and night-time prayers. Then, after darkness fell, the Messenger of God left, while the Quraysh were lying in wait for him. They had surrounded his house and were waiting for midnight when all eyes would be asleep. When he left, he was reciting this verse—*and We set before them and behind them a barrier, and have covered them so they do not see* (36:9)—and clasping a fistful of dust. Then he cast it towards their heads, whereupon they detected him not, and he left. Then he continued until he reached Hind and Abū Bakr. They got up, and they all went to the cave. Then Hind returned to Mecca at the Prophet's command, and the Prophet and Abū Bakr entered the cave.

The story continues. Then:

The next night, after the sun's rays had wholly departed, in the first third of the night, ʿAlī and Hind ibn Abī Ḥālah went to see the Prophet in the cave. The Prophet told Hind to buy two camels—one for himself, and one for his companion. Abū Bakr said, "I've already readied one mount for you and one mount for me, O Prophet of God, so we can ride them to Yathrib."

He said, "I will only take them for a price."

He said, "Agreed—it is yours."

Then the Messenger of God told ʿAlī to pay Abū Bakr for it, and told ʿAlī to look after his trusts and obligations. For, in the time of ignorance, the Quraysh used to call Muḥammad "the Trustworthy" (*al-amīn*), and used to entrust their wealth

and goods with him for him to look after. This continued after prophethood and messengership descended upon him, when the Arabs came to Mecca during the pilgrimage season. Therefore, he told ʿAlī to stand and call out, morning and evening, "Whoever has left a trust with or has a claim on Muḥammad—come hither, and we shall return it to you."

For the Messenger of God had said, "O ʿAlī! The people of Mecca will not harm you until you come to me in Medina. So take care of my trusts that the people are waiting for and return them to their owners. I also entrust my daughter Fāṭimah to you. Look after her, and I entrust both of you to my Lord and His protection." Then he said, "Buy riding-animals for yourself, the girls named Fāṭimah, and for whoever else from the Banū Hāshim who wishes to migrate with you."

Abū ʿUbaydah related:

I said to ʿUbayd Allāh—meaning Ibn Abī Rāfiʿ—"Did the Prophet have enough money for that?"

He replied, "I asked my father the same thing when he was telling me this narration. He said, 'Have you forgotten about Khadījah's wealth?'"

ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Abī Rāfiʿ said:

ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib recalled how he spent the night sleeping on the Prophet's bed and how the Prophet stayed in the cave for three nights:

> I shielded the best person ever to walk the earth,
> And the one who ever circled the Ancient House and the Black Stone—Muḥammad. When he feared their plot against him,
> My Lord protected him—the Lord of Might—from treachery.
> I spent the night watching them as they surrounded me,
> While I had prepared myself to be taken or killed,
> And the Prophet stayed in the cave, safe—
> In the protection of God, and in secret.
> He remained for three days, then reined his camel,
> Gravel flying wherever he went.

These verses have been narrated from ʿAlī with a few variations

in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* from al-Ḥākim, from ʿAli ibn al-Ḥusayn.

(6) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, regarding *the best of plotters* (8:30), Zurārah and Ḥamrān relate from Imām al-Bāqir and Imām al-Ṣādiq:
The Messenger of God had been tried greatly by his people, to the point where they came to him one day, while he was prostrating, and cast a sheep's uterus on him. His daughter came while he will still prostrating—he hadn't raised his head—and took it off him, then wiped it off him. After that, God showed him what he loved: at Badr, they only had one horseman, whereas, when they retook Mecca, they numbered twelve thousand, which made Abū Sufyān and the polytheists cry out for aid.

(7) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim from al-Suddī, may God be pleased with him:
Al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith used to frequent al-Ḥīrah[1] and listen to the rhymed prose there and what was being said. When he went to Mecca and heard the Prophet speak and the Qur'an, he said, "We have heard this. If we wanted to, we could compose something like it; this is nothing but legends of yore."

Author's comments: Some other narrations also say that al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith was the one who said this, and that he was killed at Badr.

(8) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from al-Bukhārī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mardawayh, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Dalāʾil*, that Anas ibn Mālik said:
Abū Jahl ibn Hishām said: "*O Allah, if this be the truth from You, then rain down stones upon us from the sky, or bring us a painful punishment*" (8:32). Then it was revealed: *But Allah will not chastise them while you are among them, nor will Allah chastise them*

1 The capital of the Lakhmid kingdom which was a vassal state of the Sassanian Empire. It was in modern-day Iraq. It is said that al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith learned to play and sing to the lute there, and then imported those arts to the Arabian Peninsula, whereupon the Arabs began to purchase singing-girls. It is also said that whenever people would hear the Prophet's words, he would bring them to his slave-girl, ask her to sing for them, and tell them that this was better than what the Prophet had said.

while they are seeking forgiveness (8:33).

Author's comments: Al-Qummī relates something similar in his *tafsīr*, as does al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*. There, he relates something similar from Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim, from Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, and from Ibn Jarīr from ʿĀṭāʾ—that the one who said "O God, if this be the truth from You…" was al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith; this was discussed previously with respect to the context of the verse.

(9) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Jarīr that Yazīd ibn Rūmān and Muḥammad ibn Qays said:
The Quraysh said to each other, "God thinks Muḥammad is better than the rest of us? *O Allah, if this be the truth from You, then rain down stones upon us from the sky, or bring us a painful punishment*" (8:32).
When night fell, they regretted their words and said, "Forgiveness, O God!" Then God revealed: *Nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness. Why shouldn't Allah punish them, when they are barring [people] from the Sacred Mosque, while they are not its guardians. Only the reverent may be its guardians; however, most of them do not know.* (8:33-34).

(10) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Abū al-Shaykh from Ibn Ubzā, may God be pleased with him:
The Messenger of God was in Mecca when God revealed *But Allah will not chastise them while you are among them* (8:33). When he left for Medina, God revealed: *nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness* (8:33).
After they had marched forth [to Badr], God revealed: *Why shouldn't Allah punish them, when they are barring [people] from the Sacred Mosque, while they are not its guardians. Only the reverent may be its guardians; however, most of them do not know* (8:34). Then, God allowed him to retake Mecca; this was the punishment they had been promised.

(11) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd, Ibn

Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Abū al-Shaykh from ʿAṭiyyah, may God be pleased with him:
But Allah will not chastise them while you are among them (8:33)—Meaning the polytheists, until they expel you.
Nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness.—Meaning, the faithful.
Then God returns to the polytheists and says: *Why shouldn't Allah punish them, when they are barring [people] from the Sacred Mosque?* (8:34)

(12) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Abī Ḥātim that al-Siddī said regarding the verse *nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness* (8:33):
Had they sought forgiveness and confessed to their sins, they would have been believers.

(13) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, regarding *Why shouldn't Allah punish them, when they are barring [people] from the Sacred Mosque?* (8:34), it says:
[It means]: Why shouldn't I punish them, since they are not seeking forgiveness?

(14) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Abū al-Shaykh from Mujāhid regarding:
But Allah will not chastise them while you are among them (8:33)—Meaning, in their midst.
Nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness (8:33)—Meaning, they become Muslims.

(15) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd and Ibn Jarīr from Abū Mālik:
But Allah will not chastise them while you are among them (8:33)—Meaning, the people of Mecca.
Nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness

(8:33)—Meaning, while there are faithful among them, seeking forgiveness.

(16) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim relate from ʿIkrimah and al-Ḥasan:
Nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness (8:33)—This verse was abrogated by the next verse: *Why shouldn't Allah punish them…* (8:34). Thus, they were slain in Mecca, afflicted by hunger, and besieged.

Author's comments: However, this conflicts with the context and literal meaning of the verses. Their desire to preserve the sequencing of the verses—that is, to make them all about the Meccan polytheists—impelled them to this sort of finagling. It is deeply strange that they describe the reconquest of Mecca as "punishment", since it was nothing but mercy for the polytheists and faithful alike.

(17) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from al-Tirmidhī that Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī said:
The Messenger of God said, "God revealed to me two guarantees of safety for my nation (*ummah*): *But Allah will not chastise them while you are among them* and *nor will Allah chastise them while they are seeking forgiveness* (8:33). So after I pass away, they may continue seeking forgiveness until the Day of Judgment."

Author's comments: The contents of the narration befit the verse. Something similar is related from Abū Hurayrah and Ibn ʿAbbās from the Prophet, and also in *Nahj al-Balāghah* from [Imam] ʿAlī.

However, there is something off towards the end of the narration, since the Qur'an says that punishment will befall the Muslim nation before the Day of Judgment. For this to happen, it would require that seeking forgiveness is withdrawn from them before the Day of Judgment.

(18) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Aḥmad from Faḍḍālah ibn ʿUbayd that the Prophet said:
The servant [of God] is secure from divine chastisement as long

as he is seeking forgiveness from God.

(19) In *al-Kāfī*, it is related from ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm, from his father, from Ḥannān ibn Sadīr, from his father, that Imām al-Bāqir said that the Messenger of God said:

It is good for you if I remain among you, since God says *But Allah will not chastise them while you are among them* (9.33). But it is also good for you if I leave.

They said, "O Messenger of God, it is good for you to be among us. But how is it good for us if you leave us?"

He said, "It is good for you if I leave because your deeds will be presented to me every Thursday and Monday. If they are good, God will praise them, and if they are evil, God will forgive them."

Author's comments: Something similar is related from al-ʿAyyāshi in his *tafsīr* and al-Shaykh in his *Amālī* from Ḥannān ibn Sadir, from his father, from him [Imām al-Bāqir]. In their narration, the person asking is Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī. It is also related in *al-Kāfī* via a chain of narration from Muḥammad ibn Abī Ḥamzah and others from Imām al-Bāqir.

(20) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd and Ibn Jarīr relate from Saʿīd ibn Jubayr:

The Quraysh used to clash with the Prophet when circling the Kaʿbah, laughing, and whistling, and clapping. So God revealed: *Their prayer at the House is nothing but whistling and clapping* (8:35).

(21) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Abū al-Shaykh, from Nubayṭ, who was one of the Companions:

Their prayer at the House is nothing but whistling and clapping. So taste the punishment for what you used to deny. (8:35)—They used to circle the Sacred House while whistling.

(22) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from al-Ṭastī from Ibn ʿAbbās:

Someone said to Nāfiʿ ibn al-Azraq, "Tell me about the verse *nothing but whistling (*mukāʾ*) and clapping* (tāṣdiyah) (8:35)."

He said, "*Mukāʾ* is the sound a desert-lark makes. *Tāṣdiyah* is

the sound that sparrows make and sounds like clapping. This is because when the Messenger of God used to stand for prayer in Mecca, he would pray standing between the Ḥijr and the Yemeni pillar (*al-rukn al-yamānī*). Then, two men would come from Banū Sahm. One would stand on his right and the other on his left. One would shriek out lark-whistles, while the other would slap and clap out bird-noises, to try to ruin his prayers."

(23) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is related from Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar al-Yamānī, from whoever related it to him, from Imām al-Bāqir: *When they are barring [people] from the Sacred Mosque, while they are not its guardians* (8:34)—Meaning that the polytheists are not guardians of the Sacred House.
Only the reverent may be its guardians (8:35)—Since they are worthier of being its guardians than the polytheists.
Their prayer at the House is nothing but whistling and clapping (8:35)—Meaning, sounding out whistles and claps (*taṣfīr wa taṣfiq*).

(24) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Isḥāq, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Dalāʾil* all from the same chain of narration that al-Zuhrī, Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Ḥannān, and ʿĀṣim ibn ʿUmar ibn Qatādah said that al-Ḥaṣīn ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿUmar said:
After the Quraysh had been decimated at the Battle of Badr, and those who had fled the battle returned to Mecca, and Abū Sufyān returned with his convoy, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Rabīʿah, ʿIkrimah ibn Abū Jahl, and Ṣafwān ibn Umayyah went with a group of Qurayshi men to whoever had trade goods and said, "O Quraysh! Muḥammad has slain your kin and heroes. Donate your wealth to this war so that we can take vengeance on him."
Thus, they did. Hence it is related from Ibn ʿAbbās that God revealed about them: *Those who reject faith spend their wealth to hinder people from the way of Allah. They will spend it, then regret, then be overcome; and those who reject faith shall be gathered in*

hell (8:36).

(25) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Mardawayh from Ibn ʿAbbās regarding *Those who reject faith spend their wealth to hinder people from the way of Allah* (8:36):
This was revealed regarding Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb.

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(26) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Saʿd, ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh, and Ibn ʿAsākir from Saʿīd ibn Jubayr regarding *Those who reject faith spend their wealth to hinder people from the way of Allah* (8:36):
This verse was revealed about Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb. For the Battle of Uḥud, he hired two thousand mercenaries from the Banū Kinānah allied clans to fight the Messenger of God, alongside the Arabs who joined the army. Then God revealed this verse about him. They are the ones whom Kaʿb ibn Mālik, may God be pleased with him, recited these verses about:
We came to the wave of a sea and in its midst.
There were unarmored and masked men from the clans.
They numbered three thousand, while we were the pithy remnants:
Three hundred, or maybe up to four hundred.

Author's comments: An abridged version has been related from Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Abī Ḥātim from ʿAbbād ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr.

(27) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, regarding *Fight them until there is no more strife, and religion is entirely for Allah* (8:39), it is related from Zurārah and others that Imām al-Bāqir said:
The deeper meaning (*taʾwīl*) of this verse has not yet come to pass. Were our *qāʾim* to arise, and those who journey towards him reach him, it would happen swiftly: the religion of Muḥammad would be proclaimed in such a way that, by nightfall, no one on earth would associate partners with God.

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Author's comments: ʿAyyāshī has also related this in his *tafsīr* from Zurārah from him. There is something similar in meaning in *al-Kāfī*, with a chain of narration from Muḥammad ibn Muslim from Imām al-Bāqir. Al-ʿAyyāshī also relates something similar from ʿAbd al-Aʿlā al-Ḥalabī

from Imām al-Bāqir in a long narration.

The narration from Ibrāhīm al-Laythī has already been mentioned regarding the exegesis of *So that Allah can separate the impure from the good…* (8:37) along with some of what relates to it regarding the end of the verse *just as He created you, you shall return* (7:29) in the eighth [Arabic] volume of this work.

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Verses 41 to 54

These verses cover the *khums*—or the division of the *ghanāʾim*—into fifths, firm-footedness in battle, and stories of how God toppled the enemies of the faith and abased them through divine machinations: how they are subject to the way that God treated Pharaoh and his ilk who belied the signs of God and blocked others from His path.

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَأَنَّ لِلَّهِ خُمُسَهُ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ آمَنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَىٰ
عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٤١﴾

(8:41) ***Know that whatever you gain*** **(ghanimtum)*****, a fifth of it is for Allah and the Messenger and the near of kin*** **(dhū al-qurbā)** ***and the orphans*** **(al-yatāmā)** ***and the needy and the wayfarer—if you believe in Allah and what We revealed to Our servant on the day of sorting, the day when the two hosts met. And Allah has power over all things.***

Ghunm and *ghanīmah* refer to the profits acquired through trade, work, or battle. Here, the circumstances of revelation place it in the context of the spoils of war. Al-Rāghib says:

> *Ghanam*—with two *a*'s—takes on its conventional meaning of "livestock". God says: *And of oxen and sheep* (ghanam) *We made unlawful to them [the Jews] the fat of both* (7:146).
>
> *Ghunm*, with a *u* and then no vowel, is to overcome and gain from someone, then was used for any type of gain from the side of the enemy. God says: *Know that whatever you gain (*ghanimtum*)…* (8:41) and *eat of what you have acquired (*ghanimtum*), lawfully and wholesomely* (8:69).
>
> *Maghnam* is a gain; the plural is *maghānim*. God says: *With Allah are numerous bounties* (maghānim) (4:94).

Dhū al-qurbā means "a relative". Here, it refers to the Prophet's kinsfolk,

or specific members of his family, as indubitable narrations dictate. A *yatīm* is a human child who has lost its father while young. It has been said: All animals become *yatīm* when they lose their mother, except for the human, for they become *yatīm* when they lose their father.

***A fifth of it is for Allah and the Messenger* (fa-anna lillāhi wa lil-rasūli)…:** This is recited with the vowel *a* on *anna* [as opposed to *an* with no vowel].

[There are three grammatical possibilities:]

(1) Possibly this is because there is an implied preposition here; for instance, it could be an implied phrasing of *fa-ʿalā anna lillāhi* rather than just *fa-anna lillāhi*. This would render the meaning as: "Know that whatever you acquire, it is on this basis that it has been decreed that a fifth of it is for God and His Messenger…."

(2) Possibly, it links back to the first occurrence of *anna*,[1] but the first predicate is elided because it is indicated by the context. This would render the meaning as: "Know that whatever you acquire, it is necessary to divide it. Know that a fifth of it is for God."

(3) Possibly, the conjunction *fāʾ* indicates a conditional. This would render the meaning along the lines of: "If you acquire something, then a fifth of it is for God…" The conjunction *fāʾ* here would therefore introduce the consequent (*jazāʾ*), and *anna* is repeated for emphasis. So the sentence should read as: "Know that whatever you acquire, a fifth of it is for God…." The part that would pertain to "knowing" would be "whatever you acquire, a fifth of it is for God and His messenger…" The name of God is mentioned first out of honour.

If you believe in Allah…: This places a condition on the command. That is, they should pay a fifth <u>if</u> they believe in God and what He revealed to His servant.

Some exegetes might say that this expression is linked to the previous verse—*know that Allah is your guardian* (8:40). However, the gap between the expressions disallows that.

What We revealed to Our servant on the day of sorting…: The readiest

1 The same phrase is repeated in the previous verse: *And if they turn back, then know that Allah is your guardian…* (*wa in tawallaw fa-ʿlamū <u>anna</u> Allāha mawlākum…*, 9:40). [Trans.]

meaning of this is that it refers to the Qur'an, especially given the reference to revelation to the Prophet. Were it to refer to the angels sent down during the Battle of Badr—as some exegetes hold—it would have been more appropriate for the verse to say "who we sent down to Our servant on the day of sorting", or something similar. Then, it should have said "to you [plural]" (*ʿalaykum*), not "to Our servant", for the angels were sent to help both the Prophet and the faithful, as indicated in the following verses:

> *He answered you [plural]: "I will assist you [plural] with a thousand angels following."* (8:9)

> *[Remember] when your Lord revealed to the angels: "I am with you, so make the believers firm….* (8:12)

Similarly:

> *Truly! If you remain patient and are on your guard, and they come upon you in a headlong manner, your Lord will assist you with five thousand havoc-making angels.* (3:125)

The shift from third-person to first-person (*if you believe in Allah and what We revealed to Our servant*) expresses God's grace towards His Messenger—how He has openly chosen to draw him near Himself.

A good think about what we have said with respect to the first verse of the chapter (*They ask you about the spoils of war. Say: The spoils of war belong to Allah and the Messenger…*, 8:1) leads one to realize that the verse *and what We revealed to Our servant on the day of sorting* (8:41) refers to the verse *and eat of what you have acquired, lawfully and wholesomely*.

The *day of sorting* is the day of the Battle of Badr, as indicated by the next phrase: *the day when the two hosts met.* For Badr was the day when God distinguished between truth and falsehood, established truth by supporting it, and obliterated falsehood by abandoning it.

And Allah has power over all things: This acts as an explanation for *on the day of sorting*, as indicated by God sifting out truth from falsehood. It is as if it is saying: "And God has power over everything. He has the power to differentiate truth from falsehood."

The meaning of the verse—and God knows best—is: "Know that a fifth of whatever you acquire is for God, His Messenger, the near kin, orphans, the needy, and wayfarers. So give it to the deserving, if you believe in God

and what He revealed to His servant Muḥammad on the day of Badr—which is that spoils of war are belong to God and His Messenger. No one shares in them with God and His Messenger. God has permitted you to consume some of them and has allowed you to spend some of them. However, he commands you to remit a fifth to the deserving."

The readiest meaning of the verse is that it is presenting an ongoing injunction, similar to other legal verses of the Qur'an. Here, the ruling pertains to whatever is referred to as *ghanam*^{an} and *ghanīmat*^{an}, whether it be war-booty taken from the godless, or other profits, such as those acquired through trade, wages, diving into the oceans, seafaring, buried treasures, and mining. If the verse were only meant to refer to the spoils of war, there would be no reason to allot it.

Similarly, it is clear that the other allocated expenditures in *a fifth of it is for Allah and the Messenger and the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer* restrict the spending to these groups. Each of them has an independent portion, as the same is understood from the verse about *zakāt*, except that the types are mentioned as an example.

All this is doubtless from looking at what appears from the verse, and is reinforced by Shiʿi narrations. Sunni exegetes have disagreed over how to understand the verse; we shall discuss this more in the section on narrations, God willing.

إِذْ أَنْتُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الْقُصْوَىٰ وَالرَّكْبُ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدْتُمْ لَاخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِي الْمِيعَادِ ۙ وَلَٰكِنْ لِيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيَىٰ مَنْ حَيَّ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ ۗ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٤٢﴾

(8:42) ***When you were on the nearer canyon-side*** **(bil-ʿudwat al-dunyā)** ***and they were on the farther canyon-side*** **(bil-ʿudwat al-quṣwā)***, while the caravan* **(rakb)** ***was below you. Had you made a tryst with each other, you would have broken the tryst. But [it came to pass] so that Allah could bring about a matter that was to be done, so that whosoever perishes, perishes according to a clear proof; and whosoever lives, lives according to a clear proof.***

Allah is Hearing, Knowing.

An ʿ*udwah* (sometimes spelled ʿ*idwah*) is the slope of a wadi. *Dunyā* is the feminine form of the adjective *adnā* ("nearer"), similar to *quṣwā* ["farther", which is the feminine form of the adjective *aqṣā*], although some say that *qaṣyā* is the feminine form of *aqṣā* ("farther"). *Rakb* is said to refer to the trade-caravan led by Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb.

The adverb *when* (*idh*) in *when you were on the canyon-side* acts as a second clarification of what is meant by the *day of sorting* (in 8:41, the previous verse), just as *the day when the two hosts met* acts as a first clarification of it. These relate to *We revealed upon Our servant*. However, some say that it explains *And Allah has power over all things*, in accordance with the subject. In this case, it would mean: "God had power to aid you although you were few, when you had encamped at the nearer canyon-side, so fear not afterwards." However, this is somewhat convoluted.

Had you made a tryst with each other, you would have broken the tryst: The previous context indicates that this refers to the meeting of the two armies, that the convoy had the lower ground, and that God—through His power, through which He vanquishes all—drew a dividing-line between truth and falsehood. He supported truth against falsehood. This is similar to what comes next: *But [it came to pass] so that Allah could bring about a matter that was to be done*. All of that demonstrates that the intent behind *had you made a tryst with each other, you would have broken the tryst* is to show the special will of God when He sent the inimical, mighty polytheists to the farther ground, which had water and hard soil, but He sent the faithful—although few in number—to the nearer ground, which was sandy and dry, to set their feet firm. Thus, when Abū Sufyān made camp on the lower side, He did away with their caravan. When the two companies met, there was no barrier between them, and no escape from the battle. Therefore they met for battle, facing each other. Then the faithful won. This was not due to ordinary causes but rather was due to divine intervention: aiding them through His power, demonstrating the divine care and assistance for the faithful.

Had you made a tryst with each other, you would have broken the tryst conveys the point that this encounter was not planned. It was neither the product of deliberation nor consultation. This can also be understood

from the subsequent phrase: *so that Allah could bring about a matter that was to be done*.

So that whosoever perishes, perishes according to a clear proof; and whosoever lives, lives according to a clear proof: This explains God's will in this. That is, when God decreed that this would happen upon their encounter, then aided the faithful and forsook the polytheists, so that it would be clear evidence of the truthfulness of the truth and the vacuousness of falsity. Thus, those who were destroyed were destroyed upon clear evidence, and those who were kept alive were kept alive upon clear evidence.

For that reason, it is clear that the intent behind "perishing" and "living" is guidance versus misguidance, because that is what pertains to it clearly in the verse.

And Allah is Hearing, Knowing: Similarly, this is connected to *so that whosoever perishes, perishes according to a clear proof; and whosoever lives, lives according to a clear proof* by the conjunction *and*. When God decreed what He decreed, and did what He did, it is because He is hearing—hearing their supplications—and knowing: knowing what is inside them. In it is an allusion to what it is mentioned in the verses, beginning with: *[Remember] when you sought aid from your Lord, and He answered you* (8:9).

Keeping this context in mind—that is, that the battle was really about divine destiny, not natural causes—the following verses share the same context:

> *When Allah showed them to you in your dream as few. Had He shown them to you as many, you would have faltered and quarrelled over the matter. But Allah delivered [you]. He knows what lies within.* (8:43)

> *And When the hypocrites and the sick-hearted said, "Their religion has duped them." But whoever trusts in Allah—Allah is Mighty, Wise.* (8:49)

The day of sorting means "the time when you made camp on the near slope, while they made camp on the far slope." They both made camp at the same time in such a way that, had they pre-planned the meeting, they would have argued and dispersed; things would not have happened that

way. However, this was God's decree. Thus, it followed the path of destiny, to manifest a clear sign and present a conclusive proof. For God had heard and answered their pleas, and knew their hearts' entreaties.

إِذْ يُرِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَنَامِكَ قَلِيلًا ۖ وَلَوْ أَرَاكَهُمْ كَثِيرًا لَفَشِلْتُمْ وَلَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ سَلَّمَ ۗ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٤٣﴾

(8:43) ***When Allah showed them to you in your dream as few. Had He shown them to you as many, you would have faltered*** **(la-fashiltum)** ***and quarrelled*** **(tanāzaʿtum)** ***over the matter. But Allah delivered [you]*** **(sallama).** ***He knows what lies within.***

Fashiltum (from *fashal*) means to be weak with fear. *Tanāzaʿtum* (from *tanāzuʿ*) means to argue. It comes from the root *n-z-ʿ*, which is a type of uprooting or removal, as if, when people argue, they want to pluck each other out from their positions. *Sallama* (from *taslīm*) means "to save".

The meaning of the verse is along the lines of "remember"; for instance, "remember when God showed them to you in your sleep as few, to strengthen your hearts and set your souls at ease. Had He showed them to you as many, and then had you told that to the faithful, they would have shrunk back in terror and argued about marching forth to them. However, God saved you from fear and dispute by showing them as few, for He knows what lies inside people's chests—meaning, their hearts. He attests to what mends and strengthens people's hearts as they waver between security and doubt."

The verse indicates that God sent the Prophet a dream giving glad tidings of what God promised one of the two sides. He showed the opponents as few so they would not pay them much regard. The Prophet then told the dream to the faithful and gave them glad tidings, whereupon they resolved to march forth. *Had He shown them to you as many, you would have faltered…* evinces this; this is apparent.

وَإِذْ يُرِيكُمُوهُمْ إِذِ الْتَقَيْتُمْ فِي أَعْيُنِكُمْ قَلِيلًا وَيُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِي أَعْيُنِهِمْ لِيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا ۗ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٤٤﴾

(8:44) ***When He showed them to you, when you met, he made***

them seem few in your eyes, and He made you seem little in their eyes, so that Allah could bring about a matter which was to be done; and to Allah are all matters returned.

The meaning of the verse is clear. There is no contradiction between this verse and the following verse, assuming that it refers to the Battle of Badr:

> *There was a sign for you in the two hosts which met: one party fighting in the way of Allah and the other unbelieving, whom they saw twice as many as themselves with the sight of the eye. Allah strengthens with His aid whom He pleases; there is a lesson in this for those who have sight.* (3:13)

This is because when the verse refers to them as "few", it is speaking about *when you met*. Therefore, there is no contradiction. It is as if, when they were at the wadi, God presented the faithful as few in the eyes of the polytheists so that the polytheists would make light of their forces and jostle to come down and fight. Then, when they came down and spread out, the faithful began to appear numerous. This appeared to them as if they were seeing it with their own eyes. Their resolve faltered, their hearts took flight, and this was their defeat. The verse in Sūrah al-Anfāl is referring to the beginning the battle, whereas the verse in Sūrah Āl-i ʿImrān is speaking about what happened after they climbed down and mingled with the others.

So that Allah could bring about a matter which was to be done is linked to and explains *When He showed them to you*.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوا وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ ۖ وَاصْبِرُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بَطَرًا وَرِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ ﴿٤٧﴾

(8:45-47) ***O you who believe! When you meet a battle-contingent, be firm, and remember Allah much, that you may be successful.***

And obey Allah and His Messenger. Do not quarrel, lest you falter and lose your advantage. Be patient; Allah is with the patient. Be not like those who left their homes exulting, to be seen by men, who turn [others] away from the way of Allah, while Allah comprehends what they do.

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Al-Rāghib says in *al-Mufradāt*:

> *Thābit* ("firm", "stable") is the antonym of *zawāl* ("disappearing", "vanishing").

Here, it denotes not fleeing from the enemy. Its meaning here is more general than "patience" (*ṣabr*), which is enjoined in: *Be patient; Allah is with the patient*. Patience is firmness before something one's heart avers from, whereupon the heart neither weakens nor fears nor worries, and the body neither idles nor is inadvertent nor moves from its place; it only does things that beget praise later. Therefore, patience is a specific type of steadfastness.

Rīḥ is said to mean "might" and "rule". [It also means "wind".] Al-Rāghib says that *riḥ* in this verse is a figure of speech for "victory". It is as if wind shakes whatever it strikes, toppling it over and blowing it along. Victory over the enemy does to the enemy the same thing that wind does to an object, like dust. Therefore, *rīḥ* can be used figuratively for "victory".

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Al-Rāghib says:

> *Baṭar* is bewilderment which strikes a person when misusing and misappropriating abundance and prosperity. God says: *exulting (*baṭar[an]*), to be seen by men* (8:47) and *which exulted in its means of subsistence (*baṭirat maʿīshatahā*)* (28:58). Originally, this was *baṭirat maʿīshatuhā*; then, the verb did not govern it and it was read in the accusative.
>
> *Baṭar* is similar to *ṭarab* ("delight", "rapture"). It refers to the levity experienced by people at times of joy, and is also used at times of grief. *Baṭīrah* means "veterinary medicine".

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Riʾāʾ means "to present one's self as something one is not".

Fa-thbitū is an imperative saying to remain absolutely firm in the face of the enemy, not to flee. The imperative is not repeated a second time with "patience" since it has already been mentioned and is referring to it.

And remember Allah much: Meaning, in your hearts and on your

tongues; all of that is "remembrance". It is known that the inner states of the human heart are what distinguish and specify its aims, whether or not they match what a person says. For instance, a person suffering from poverty beseeches God to relieve that, saying, "O needless!" (*yā ghanī*). An ill person beseeches God to relieve that, saying, "O healer!" (*yā shāfī*). If the needy or infirm say "*Yā Allāh!*", they still mean "O needless!" or "O healer!", for these traits are what their conditions impel them to seek aid for. They intend nothing else; this is clear.

As for the one who comes out to fight, then meets the enemy, ready for the realities of battle—soul-slashing, bloodshed, and limb-severing—all that threatens to destroy man and separate him from what he loves—his inner state will direct his thoughts and will towards the victory that he seeks in the battle: victory over the enemy who threatens to annihilate him. As for the one whose inner state and thoughts are like this, he remembers God in a way that is concordant with his inner state, and his thoughts are directed this way.

This is the strongest contextualization to show that the intent behind "remembering God much" is to say that the faithful remember what God taught them of the understandings connected to this matter—that is, that He is their God and Lord in whose hand lie death and life, who is able to assist them, and who is their guardian—the best guardian and the best ally, who swore to assist them when He said: *If you aid Allah, Allah shall aid you and set your feet firm* (47:7) and *Allah does not squander the reward of those who do good* (11:115). Fighting will end up with one of two good outcomes: either victory over the enemy, raising the flag of Islam, and purifying the atmosphere for religious fruition; or being killed in the way of God, and, through martyrdom, being brought towards God's mercy, entering the confines of His generosity, proximity with His *awliyāʾ* near Him, and other true understandings along these lines which invoke real happiness and eternal honour.

"Remember" is qualified with "much" to renew the spirit of God-consciousness whenever anything looms which sparks love of this fleeting world and enjoying its deceptive adornments, or the seductive thoughts that Satan casts into the human being.

And obey Allah and His Messenger: The apparent meaning from the

context is that this means to obey the divine commands and prohibitions issued to the Messenger with respect to obligation and the code of conduct pertaining to warfare and defense of the body of the faith and the glory of Islam. This is understood from the verses about warfare and the Prophetic practice (*sunnah*) surrounding it, such as beginning by providing evidence, not attacking women or children, not attacking the enemy at night, and other things found in the laws regarding warfare.

Do not quarrel, lest you falter and lose your advantage: Meaning, do not argue between yourselves, since this will weaken your will. You will lose your strength and your rule, or be defeated, for differences of opinion weaken unity and weaken forces.

Be patient; Allah is with the patient: Meaning, remain patient over the difficulties of war that afflict you, and how the enemy threatens to wipe you out. Do so remembering God copiously and obeying God and His messenger, lest events shake you, obedience become a burden, sin tempt you, or vainglory mislead you.

The command *be patient* is reinforced by *Allah is with the patient* since patience is the strongest aid in the face of difficulty, the strongest bolster against hardship eating away at one's will. It enables a person to think clearly and calmly when their thoughts fly about, weakening their will at times of distress when difficulty afflicts them from all sides. Thus, God is with the patient.

Be not like those who left their homes exulting, to be seen by men, who turn [others] away from the way of Allah, while Allah comprehends what they do: This verse is a prohibition on following in the footsteps of those cocky, two-faced hypocrites who block others from the path of God. From the context, it can be understood that this refers to the Qurayshī faithless, and their demerits—arrogance, hypocrisy, and blocking others from the way of God—are what spurred this prohibition on aping them and traipsing after them. *While Allah comprehends* (muḥīṭ)[1] *what they do* indicates that God, God's authority, and God's kingdom encompass their deeds. Therefore, their actions must already fall under the domain of

1 Here, *comprehend* is meant in the formal sense of "surrounding" or "encompassing", although of course it carries the nuance of "knowing". [Trans.]

divine decree and may only be carried out with divine permission; they cannot disable God. All in all, this is a figure of speech clarified by a later verse: *Let not those who disbelieve think that they shall take the lead; they shall thwart nothing* (8:59).

Taking into account these conditions—*exulting, to be seen by men, who turn [others] away from the way of Allah*—shows that this prohibition essentially says: do not march forth from your homes to fight the enemy arrogantly and hypocritically, making a show of your faith. Barring others from the way of God occurs through inciting people to abandon God-consciousness, dive into sin, and stop obeying the divine commands and laws. This thwarts their deeds, extinguishes the light of faith, and renders their rallying fruitless. For the only path to salvation and victory, achieving these important goals, is the straight path which the upright religion lays out, facilitating it in accordance with the human being's inner nature. And God does not guide the wicked to their wicked aims.

These three verses (8:45-47) outline six matters which God requires the faithful to observe during battle: firmness, remembering God much, obeying God and His messenger, not quarrelling, not going out exultingly or to be seen by others, and not barring people from the path of God.

Together, these six matters comprise a broad regluation for warfare which omit nothing. If one takes a close look at what happened during the battles of Islam during the time of the Prophet—like Badr, Uḥud, Khandaq, Ḥunayn, and the others—it becomes clear that victory versus defeat hinged on the Muslims observing or not observing this divine decree, as well as being strict versus lax about it.

وَإِذْ زَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَقَالَ لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَإِنِّي جَارٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ فَلَمَّا تَرَاءَتِ الْفِئَتَانِ نَكَصَ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ وَقَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّنكُمْ إِنِّي أَرَ

(8:48) ***When Satan made their deeds seem fair to them and said, "No one can overcome you today while I am your defender*** **(jār)**.***" But when the two hosts saw each other, he turned on his heels and said, "I have nothing to do with you! I see what you see not. I fear Allah, and Allah is severe in retribution."***

When Satan "makes deeds seem fair," he instills the notion into people's hearts that their acts are good—nay, delightful. By whipping up their inner faculties (*quwwā*) and emotions surrounding that deed, he draws their hearts to it, whereby they no longer have any space to consider the repercussions of their acts.

It is not farfetched to say that "*No one can overcome you today*" explains or acts as an explanation (*tafsīr*) of Satan's "making their deeds seem fair", if by "deeds" is meant mean "their outcomes": here, things, such as mustering weaponry, men, singing-girls, instruments, and wine, as well as ordering the army and sending troops to the forefront. Possibly, "deeds" could also mean the actual deeds themselves; that is, plunging headlong into temptation, wrongdoing, persistence in diverging from God and His messenger, oppression, and evil. In this case, *"No one can overcome you today*" is the penultimate part of how Satan makes their deeds seem fair by making killing the Muslims appealing to them. The final part is when he says, *"while I am your defender."*

Jiwār ("being neighbours") was one of the pre-Islamic customs. Since the pre-Islamic Arabs used to live with their tribes, it was expected that if someone was attacked, others would come to their aid. In various societies, other customs regarding neighbourliness have also been recorded.

But when the two hosts saw each other, he turned* (nakaṣa) *on his heels: *Nukūṣ* means to recoil or back off from something. *On his heels* (*ʿalā ʿaqibayh*) is an adverbial descriptor. The *ʿuqb* is the heel, meaning that he flinched and fled defeat.

"I see what you see not": This explains *"I have nothing to do with you!"* Possibly, it refers to the angels descending to aid the Muslims. Similarly, "I fear God, and God is severe in retribution" explains *"I have nothing to do with you"* and the previous explanation.

It means: The "day of sorting" was the time when Satan made the polytheists find it seemly that they should diverge from God and His Messenger, slay the faithful, and ready themselves to extinguish God's light. He made their eyes and souls delight in this by saying, "No one shall overcome you today while I am defending you." Then, when the polytheists and the faithful encountered each other at battle, Satan turned and fled, saying, "I see what you do not see—angels descending to aid the faithful,

threatening to torment you. I fear God's punishment, and God is severe in punishment."

This meaning—as you can see—is in accordance with Satan's whispering in their hearts, urging them against the faithful, rousing them for battle, and making them rejoice in their battle-preparations. Then, when the two forces met, divine aid descended, and fear settled in their hearts, their vain aspirations of valour and victory morphed into terror, despair, and loss, overtaking their hearts.

This is in accordance with Satan taking human form, displaying himself to them in such a way that their senses perceived him, seeing him and hearing what he said: *"No one can overcome you today while I am your defender."* Thus, he tempted them into battle. Then, when the two sides met, and he saw that the situation was different from what he had hoped for, he took off, saying, *"I have nothing to do with you! I see what you see not"*—that is, divine aid and angels descending. *"I fear Allah, and Allah is severe in retribution."* Both Shiʿi and Sunni narrations support this view—that is, that Satan manifested to the polytheists in the form of Surāqah ibn Mālik ibn Jushʿum al-Kinānī (sometimes also referred to as al-Mudlijī), who was a chief of the Kanānah. He said to him what he said, then hefted up their banner until the two sides met. Then he fled, defeated, saying *"I have nothing to do with you! I see what you see not…."* Narrations on this shall be presented in the section on narrations, God willing.

Still, some exegetes insist on the first view and deny the second, rejecting the narrations and weakening their chains of narration. Even though these narrations are not copious beyond doubt (*mutawātir*) and are not bolstered by certain proofs that would establish their reliability without any doubt, their core meaning can be defended rationally. Furthermore, it does not contradict accounts in authenticated narrations. Nothing prevented Satan from taking human form and leading them [the Qurayshī polytheists] astray, until he accomplished his goal and left them to be destroyed, or until he witnessed divine punishment, whereupon he fled.

Moreover, the context of the verse is more suited to the second view, especially considering these parts: *"While I am your defender." But when the two hosts saw each other, he turned on his heels […] "I see what you see not."* It would be deeply unlikely for *"I see"* to be meant metaphorically

and to be confined to the realm of thoughts.

إِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ غَرَّ هَٰؤُلَاءِ دِينُهُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٤٩﴾

(8:49) ***When the hypocrites and the sick-hearted said, "Their religion has duped them." But whoever trusts in Allah—Allah is Mighty, Wise.***

Meaning: The hypocrites—who made a pretence of faith but hid faithlessness—and the diseased-hearted—who had weak faith and retained doubts—mocked the faithful by saying, "Their religion has misguided these poor things. Otherwise, they would never have marched forth to a clear defeat. They are a puny force with no gear, whereas the Quraysh have equipment, numbers, and might."

But whoever trusts in Allah—Allah is Mighty, Wise: This is the reply—that *they* are the ones who are deceived. The expression *Allah is Mighty, Wise* substitutes the causer [God] with the cause. It means: These hypocrites and sick-hearted folk spoke wrongly, for the faithful trust in God and revert all matters back to Him, even if they have material causes. They unite themselves with His power and might. Whenever someone entrusts a matter to God, God suffices that person, for He is Mighty, aiding those who seek His aid, and wise, never erring in settling matters properly.

The verse provides evidence that a group of hypocrites and a group of those with weak faith were present at Badr when the forces met. Since the hypocrites, by definition, were those who pretended to accept Islam but hid faithlessness, they must have been among the Muslims, since it would have been meaningless for them to be on the side of the polytheists. However, the situation required steadfastness on a severe day.

Those who had weak faith, who doubted the reality of Islam, could have been on either side of the battle (the Muslims or the polytheists). It is said that some of them were on the side of the Quraysh. They had accepted Islam in Mecca and had been imprisoned by their fathers. Then, they had been forced to march to Badr with the polytheists. When they arrived and saw how few and unprepared the Muslims were, they said, "Their religion has duped them!" This shall be discussed more in the

section on narrations, God willing.

In any case, it is worth scrutinizing this verse to figure out why hypocrites and the diseased-hearted showed up at this battle, where the only ones who could stand firm were those men whose hearts were true in faith and who relied on non-material aid. Why did they remain there on the Muslim side? We may discuss this further with respect to some pertinent verses in Sūrah al-Tawbah about the hypocrites and the diseased-hearted.

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ يَتَوَفَّى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۙ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ ﴿٥٠﴾ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ ﴿٥١﴾

(8:50-51) ***If you could see when the angels take the souls of those who reject faith, smiting their faces and backs. "Taste the punishment, burning! This is because of what your own hands have wrought, and because Allah never wrongs His servants."***

Yatawaffā means "seizing a right completely". It is mostly used in the Qur'an to mean "plucking the soul" [at death]. This verse says that the angels take the soul, whereas other verses say that the Angel of Death or God takes the soul:

Say: The Angel of Death, who has been entrusted with you, will take your souls. (32:11)

Allah takes the souls at the time of death. (39:42)

This shows that the Angel of Death has aides who assist in taking the soul, and are at his beck and call, just as he acts at God's command and does as he is told. Thus, it is acceptable to say that the angels take the soul, to say that the Angel of Death takes the soul, and also that God takes the soul.

Smiting their faces and backs: The most apparent meaning is that they are striking the front and back of their bodies; this is a figure of speech indicating that they are surrounded, struck from all sides. Some exegetes take "backs" (*al-adbār*) figuratively to mean "buttocks" and *faces*

as "foreheads"; they understand the expression metaphorically to mean that they are being utterly humiliated.

"Taste the punishment, burning!": Meaning, the angels say to them, "Taste the burning punishment which is the Fire!"

This is because of what your own hands have wrought: Either this is the last sentence of what the angels say, or else it [not said by the angels and] refers to everything that is being done to them as well as what the angels are saying to them. It either means "we shall make you taste burning punishment because of your hands have wrought" or "we shall strike your from front and behind and make you taste burning punishment because of what your hands have wrought."

And because Allah never wrongs **(laysa bi-ẓallām)** ***His servants:*** this is appended via a conjunction to *what your own hands have wrought*. It means that God is not a tyrant or unjust being (*ẓallām*) with respect to any of His servants.[1] That is, He never wrongs any of his servants, for He is upon the straight path. He never swerves from this, nor does He contradict His own acts. Were he to wrong any of them or be unfair, he would become a tyrant or villian (*ẓallām*) towards all His servants. You may ponder upon that.

From the context of these verses, it can be understood that the ones whom the angels are smiting and tormenting are the Qurayshī polytheists who were killed at the Battle of Badr.

كَدَأْبِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ ۙ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٥٢﴾

(8:52) ***Like the people of Pharaoh*** **(daʾb-i Āl-i Firʿawn)** ***and those before him. They disbelieved in Allah's communications and signs. Therefore, Allah destroyed them because of their faults. Allah is strong, severe in retribution.***

Daʾb and *daydan* mean "a habit"—that is, an act that someone persists

1 Grammatically, *ẓallām* is a noun for a doer (such as "tyrant", "villain", or "unjust person"); however, it has been rendered as the verb *wrongs* in the translation for ease of reading. *Servants* refers to all human beings, not only Muslims or the faithful. [Trans.]

in, or a path that someone treads. It means that the way these people's faithlessness resembles that of Pharaoh and the destroyed, disbelieving nations before him. They rejected the signs of God, thereby sinning, and so God took them to task for their sins. For God is strong—not too weak to take them—and when He does take them, He is severe in retribution.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ ۙ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾

(8:53) ***This is because Allah never changes a blessing which He has blessed a people with until they change what is inside themselves, and because Allah is Hearing, Knowing.***

Divine punishment follows divine blessings. Divine blessings persist, and do not change into divine retribution, as long as the locus of these divine blessings—that is, the people themselves—do not change. Divine blessings issue forth to a people in accordance with their readiness to accept them. Only when people change their capacity and the qualification for the overflow of blessings and garb themselves with the capacity to receive divine torment do divine blessings change into divine retribution.

This is a universal law with respect to the transformation of divine blessings into divine retribution. Even more general is this:

> *Allah does not change what is with a people until they change what is inside themselves* (13:11).

This is because verse 13:11 encompasses both the transformation of divine blessings into retribution, and vice versa, whereas the verse at hand is more expressive of the transformation of divine blessings into divine retribution.

In any case, *This is because Allah never changes a blessing…* expresses a universal law with respect to a specific incident: taking the Qurayshi polytheists to account for their crimes, and chastising them. This principle is part of the divine wont (*sunnah*) running [throughout time and creation]: that when God blesses a people, He never withdraws that blessing unless they themselves change.

And because Allah is Hearing, Knowing: This is a second explanation,

following the first explanation that *this is because Allah never changes a blessing…*. Keeping the context in mind, it can be taken to mean: "This is because God hears their pleas and knows their needs. Thus, He responded to them and chastened their enemies who rejected the signs of God." It can also be taken to mean: "This is because He hears their words and knows their actions. So He chastened them due to that." Possibly, both understandings can be combined.

كَدَأْبِ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ ۙ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ
بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۚ وَكُلٌّ كَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

(8:54) ***Like the people of Pharaoh and those before him. They denied Allah's communications and signs. Therefore, We destroyed them for their crimes and drowned the people of Pharaoh, for they were all wrongdoers.***

This echoes verse 8:52 (*Like the people of Pharaoh and those before him. They disbelieved…*) to show the similarity between the two situations:

Verse 8:52 reflects on *this is because of what your own hands have wrought, and because Allah never wrongs His servants…* (8:51).

Verse 8:54 reflects on *Allah never changes a blessing which He has blessed a people with until they change what is inside themselves…* (8:53).

However, 8:54 contains a shift in person: verse 8:52 says that *Allah destroyed them*, whereas verse 8:54 says *We destroyed them*. Perhaps, this is because verse 8:54 reflects on the verse about the bestowal (or removal) of divine blessings. These blessings emanate from God towards His servants, whereas it is only the people themselves who spoil them. This is a matter between the Lord and His servants, and pertains to how they absent themselves from the straight path. Thus, there is somewhat of a variation between the context of verses 8:52 and 8:54.

Furthermore, verse 8:52 says *they denied Allah's communications and signs (*kafarū bi-āyāt Allāh*)*, whereas verse 8:54 says *they disbelieved in Allah's communications and signs* (kadhdhabū bi-āyāt-i rabbihim). Therefore, shifting to the first person plural (*We destroyed them for their crimes*, 8:54) conveys the enormity of the matter. It also indicates that God has agents or intermediaries who act at His command and carry out

His will.

We destroyed them for their crimes and drowned the people of Pharaoh: The object of the verse (*the people of Pharaoh*) is specified, rather than referred to by a pronoun, to avoid confusion over who the pronoun is referring to. That is, it does not simply say *We drowned them* to avoid confusion over who was drowned: *the people of Pharaoh* only, or *the people of Pharaoh* and also all *those before him*.

For they were all wrongdoers: Meaning, divine punishment seized all of them: the Qurayshī faithless, the people of Pharaoh, and those who came before them. All of them were wrongdoers before God.

From this, it can also be understood that God only subjects someone to severe torment or withdraws a blessing from a person if that person has devolved into tyranny or oppression (*ẓulm*), thereby scorning God's signs. God only chastises those who merit it.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *al-Kāfī*, it is related from ʿAli ibn Ibrāhīm, from his father, from Ibn Abī ʿUmayr, from al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿUthmān, from Samāʿah:
I asked Abū al-Ḥasan [Imām al-Kāẓim] about the *khums*. He said, "It is on everything that people gain profits on, small or large."

(2) In *al-Kafī*, it is related from ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm, from his father, from Ḥammād ibn ʿĪsā, from some of our companions, from al-ʿAbd al-Ṣāliḥ:
Khums is due on five things: war-booty, [things acquired from] diving, treasures, mining, and proceeds from seafaring. From each of these five categories, one-fifth should be taken out and given to those whom God has specified. [The other] four-fifths are to be divided among the fighters or those who sponsor fighters. The one-fifth [that is given as *khums*] is divided into six shares, a share each for: God, His Messenger, the near of kin, orphans, the needy, and stranded wayfarers.
After the time of the Prophet, the shares of God and the Prophet are inherited by the rightful leader (*ūlū al-amr*). Thus, the rightful leader collects three shares: two shares as inheritance, and one

share designated for him by God. Therefore, he collects one half of the sum total of the *khums*.

The other half is distributed among the people of his house: a part for their orphans, a part for their needy, and a part for their stranded wayfarers. These are divided among them in accordance with the Book and the Sunnah in an amount that would free them from need for one year. Anything extra goes to the leader (*wālī*). If there is a shortfall and they are still in need, it is the leader's responsibility to pay their expenses. It falls upon him to provide for them because he takes the extra. God has given the *khums* to them specifically, rather than to all needy people or all stranded wayfarers, because they do not accept charity (*ṣadaqāt*) from the people, as an honor from God for the family of the Prophet and to purify them from the filth of the people. He Himself has specified them and provided for them in this way, to uplift them from degradation and poverty. However, there is no problem if they give charity (*ṣadaqāt*) to each other.

These are the *near of kin* whom God has designated the *khums* for, whom He mentions in the verse: *and warn your near of kin* (26:214). They are the children of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib themselves: the males and the females, not the children of any other of the houses of the Quraysh, or any other Arabs. Their *mawālī* (servants or former servants) also do not take any shares [of the *khums*], since the *mawālī* are allowed to take charity from the people; they are on the same level as the people.

A person whose mother is from Banū Hāshim and whose father is from a different branch of the Quraysh may take charity but does not receive *khums*, since God said: *Call them by their fathers* (33:5).

(3) In *al-Tahdhīb*, it is related via a chain of narration from ʿAlī ibn Mahziyār that ʿAlī ibn Rāshid told him:

I told him,[1] "You have commanded me to uphold your affair and collect your due, and you have also told your servants (*mawālī*)

1 One of the Imams; the name is unspecified. [Trans.]

this. Some of them replied, 'What is his due?' I didn't know what to tell them!"
He told him, "They must pay the *khums*."
I asked, "On what things?"
He said, "Their goods and wastage."
I asked, "What about the trader and craftsman?"
He said, "Yes, if they are able to after they have paid for their expenses."

(4) In *al-Tahdhīb*, it is related via a chain of narration from Zakariyā ibn Mālik al-Juʿfī, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh [Imām al-Ṣādiq]:
He [Imām al-Ṣādiq] was asked about the verse: *Know that whatever you gain, a fifth of it is for Allah and the Messenger and the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer—if you believe in Allah and what We revealed to Our servant on the day of sorting, the day when the two hosts met. And Allah has power over all things* (8:41).
He [Imām al-Ṣādiq] said, "Allah's share of the *khums* belongs to the Imam, and the Messenger's share of the *khums* belongs to the Imam. The near of kin's share, which belongs to the Prophet's kin, goes to the Imam. The orphans, the needy, and the stranded wayfarers are the orphans, needy, and stranded wayfarers of the family of the Prophet. So do not spend their [wealth] on others."

(5) In *al-Tahdhīb*, it is related via a chain of narration from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Naṣr:
Ibrāhim ibn Abī al-Bilād asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh [Imām al-Ṣādiq], "Do you have to pay *zakāt*?"
He said, "No, but there is excess wealth, and we give it like this."
He was asked about the verse *Know that whatever you gain, a fifth of it is for Allah and the Messenger and the near of kin…* (8:41).
Someone asked him, "Who takes God's share?"
He said, 'The Messenger; the Imam now takes the Messenger's share.'
Someone asked, "What if there is an excess or shortfall with

respect to the expenses of some of the shares?"
He said, 'The Imam handles this. Did you see what the Messenger of God did? He used to spend as he saw fit. The Imam likewise does the same."

Author's comments: Copious (*mutawātir*) narrations from the Imams of the family of the Prophet concur that the *khums* should be partitioned among God, the Messenger, and the Imam, orphans, kinsfolk, needy, and stranded wayfarers among the Prophet's family; it should not go to anyone outside these groups. Narrations specify six shares of the *khums*, which is not limited to war booty. Rather, it is a general tax, encompassing anything that can be called a "gain" (*ghanīmah*), such as earnings, treasures, what is acquired from the sea, minerals, and seafaring—as was mentioned. This is a gift from God to the family of the Prophet since He has forbidden them to accept alms-tax and charity (*zakāt* and *ṣadaqāt*).

(6) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Abī Shaybah—and, from another chain, from Ibn al-Mundhir—from Ibn ᶜAbbās:
Najdah al-Ḥarūrī sent a question to Ibn ᶜAbbās about the share of the near ones which God mentions.
He [Ibn ᶜAbbās] wrote back, "We understood them to be ourselves; however, our people rejected that."
They [Najdah's delegation] said, "He [Najdah] asks, 'Who do you think it belongs to (*qālū wa yaqūl li-man tarāhu*)?'"
Ibn ᶜAbbās said, "It belongs to the Prophet's kin; the Prophet divided it among them. However, ᶜUmar reduced our share. When we saw that he was shortchanging it, we refused to accept it. He proffered that it should only be used to help pay for their marriages, pay their debts, or go to destitute members of the Prophet's kin; he refused anything beyond that."

Author's comments: In the narration, the expression *qalū wa yaqūl li-man tarāhu* means: "The delegation that Najdah al-Ḥarūrī sent to Ibn ᶜAbbās said, 'Najah says, "Who do you think the *khums* is for?"'" That is, they are asking him for his fatwa about who the *khums* should be spent on.

"It belongs to the Prophet's kin; the Prophet divided it among them": The clearest understanding of this is that it explains *the near of kin* (8:41) as the Prophet's kinsfolk. The clearest understanding of the previous narrations from the Imams of the family of the Prophet is that they explain *the near of kin* (8:41) to refer to the Imam's kinsfolk. The apparent meaning of the verse reinforces this understanding, insofar as it uses the singular.[1]

(7) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn al-Mundhir from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Laylā:

I asked ʿAlī about it [*khums*]. I said, "O Commander of the Faithful, tell me, what did Abū Bakr and ʿUmar do with your share of the *khums*?"

He said, "Abū Bakr did not deal with *khums* during his term. ʿUmār continually ceded the *khums* to me, even the *khums* from Sūs and Jandīsābūr. Once, when I was with him, he said, 'This is your share of the *khums*, the share of the family of the Prophet; however, the circumstances of some of the Muslims had grown dire.' So I said, 'Yes [you may give it to them].'

"At that, Al-ʿAbbās ibn Abī Ṭālib leapt up and said, 'Do not give our share to others.'

"I said, 'Are we not the most generous of the Muslims? The Commander of the Faithful [ʿUmar] has interceded on their behalf.' Thus, ʿUmar took the *khums* away, permanently, by God. Then, during the reign of ʿUthmān, we had no access to it.'"

Then ʿAlī declaimed, "God forbade His Messenger from accepting charity and appointed a share of the *khums* in its stead. He also forbade his family, alone in the *ummah*, from accepting charity. Thus, a share was appointed for them, like the Messenger, in lieu of what they had been forbidden."

8. In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Ibn ʿAbbās that the Messenger of God said:

I have kept you away from people's scraps [lit. left over runoff-water]. However, you have a share of the *khums* to suffice you

1 That is, *near of kin* (dhī al-qurbā, 8:41) is in the singular; it says *kinsfolk* rather than *kinsfolks*. [Trans.]

and take care of your needs.

Author's comments: This is predicated upon a fifth being for the family of the Prophet and the near of kin only.

(8) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Abī Shaybah that Jubayr ibn Muṭʿim said:
The Messenger of God had distributed the share of the near of kin to Banū Hāshim and Banū al-Muṭṭalib.
ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān and I walked until we came to him [the Prophet]. Then I said, "O Messenger of God, these are your brothers from Banū Hāshim. None can deny their nobility due to their closeness with you—which God has given them. However, why are you providing for the Banū al-Muṭṭalib but not us, while we both share equally close kin ties?"
He said, "They did not abandon us—neither before nor after the time of Islam."

(9) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn Mardawayh relates from Zayd ibn Arqam:
The family of Muḥammad (*āl-i Muḥammad)* who were given the *khum*s are the families of ʿAlī and ʿAbbās and Jaʿfar and ʿAqīl.

Author's comments: There are many Sunni narrations about this. However, they disagree about how the Prophet handled the *khums*. For instance, some say he used to divide the *khums* into four parts, and others say that he used to divide it into five parts.

However, there is near-agreement in the Sunni narrations that a share of the *khums* belongs to the kinsfolk of the Prophet, who are referred to as the *near of kin* in the verse on *khums*. This is different from what appears in Shiʿi narrations.

One of the things that is nearly agreed-upon is that the Prophet used to divide the *khums* among the family of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib while he was alive. This stopped during the time of the first three caliphs, and continued like that after them.

Additionally, there is near-agreement in the Sunni narrations that the *khums* specifically related to the spoils of war. The Sunni narrations

do not extend *khums* to anything that can be called a "gain" (*ghanīmah*), unlike the Shiʿi narrations.

We have already spoken of the matters pertaining to the exegesis of the verse. However, one can examine some rhetorical or jurisprudential considerations, which are outside the scope of our discussion. For instance, one can delve into the matter of social rights and *khums*, as well as its effect on the Islamic society. This will be discussed in the section on *zakāt*.

There remains to discuss what the narrations say about how God ordained the *khums* as an honour for the Prophet's family, so they would not have to sully themselves by collecting people's wealth. Presumably, this is taken from the verse on *zakāt*, which is addressed to the Prophet: *Take alms out of their property, you would cleanse them and purify them thereby, and pray for them; surely your prayer is a relief to them…* (9:103). "Purification" (*taṭhīr* and *tazkiyah*) pertain to things which can be dirtied.[1] However, one does not get this sense from the verse on *khums*.

(10) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from ʿAbd al-Razzāq and Ibn Ḥarīr that ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr said:

The Messenger of God was commanded in the Qur'an to fight. His first battle was Badr, where the commander of the polytheists was ʿUtbah ibn Rabīʿah ibn ʿAbd al-Shams. The two sides met at Badr on a Friday; it was the sixteenth or seventeenth of Ramaḍān. The Prophet had three-hundred-odd men, while the polytheists had one thousand nine-hundred men. That was the "day of sorting" (*yawm al-furqān*), on which God distinguished truth from falsehood. The first person to fall at the battle was Mihjaʿ, the servant of ʿAmr, one of the Helpers.[2] That day, God routed the polytheists: more than seventy of their men were killed, and a similar number were taken captive.

1 That is, wealth and property can contain "dirt" or "filth" (*wasakh*, which is the term used in a narration cited, and also is the term ʿAllāmah is using here) and be cleansed, similar to how a piece of cloth can get dirty and be washed. [Trans.]

2 Other sources refer to him as Mihjaʿ the servant of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. [Trans.]

(11) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Mardawayh from ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib:

The "night of sorting" (*laylat al-furqān*), the night before the two forces met [for the Battle of Badr], was a Thursday night, on the seventeenth of Ramaḍān.

Author's comments: Something similar is related from Ibn Jarīr, from al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī; from Ibn Abī Shaybah from Jaʿfar from his father; and from him, from Abū Bakr, from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Hishām. Something similar is also related from ʿĀmir ibn Rabīʿah al-Badrī; however, that narration says that the Battle of Badr occurred on a Monday, which was the seventeenth of Ramaḍān.

Possibly, some Shiʿi narrations could be taken to mean that the Battle of Badr happened on the nineteenth of Ramaḍān, since these narrations refer to the Night of Power (*laylat al-qadr*). However, they are referring to something other than what is intended by the verse *the day of sorting, the day when the two hosts met* (8:41). For instance, in *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is related from Isḥāq ibn ʿAmmār:

Abū ʿAbdillāh [Imām al-Ṣādiq] said, "The nineteenth of Ramaḍan is when the two hosts meet."

I said, "What does 'the two hosts meet' mean?"

He said, "On that day, the divine will for the past and future meet, as do the divine will and divine decree."

(12) It is related in *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī* from Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā that Abū ʿAbdillāh [Imām al-Ṣādiq] said about *while the caravan was below you* (8:42):

This was Abū Sufyān and his lot.

(13) Regarding *so that whosoever perishes, perishes according to a clear proof; and whosoever lives, lives according to a clear proof* (8:42), *Tafsīr al-Qummī* says:

Those who survived knew that God had aided them.

(14) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, regarding *when He showed them to you, when you met…* (8:44), Ibn Abī Shaybah, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Shaykh,

and Ibn Mardawayh relate that Ibn Masʿūd said:
On the day of Badr, they were made to appear so few in our eyes that I asked a man next to me, "Do you think there are seventy of them?"
He said, "No, a hundred."

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(15) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, regarding *O you who believe! When you meet a battle-contingent…* (8:45), al-Ḥākim relates from—and authenticates it from—Abū Mūsā:
The Messenger of God disliked battle-cries.

(16) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Abī Shaybah, from al-Nuʿmān ibn Muqarrin:
When the Messenger of God was at battle, he would not fight in the first part of the day. Rather, he would postpone it until the sun was declining, the winds were blowing, and divine aid was descending.

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(17) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, regarding *when Satan made their deeds seem fair to them* (8:48), it is related via a chain of narration from Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Furāt, from Abū al-Muqaddam Thaʿlabah ibn Zayd al-Anṣārī:
I heard Jābir ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Ḥarām al-Anṣārī say, "Iblīs took human form four times. [First,] during the Battle of Badr, when he appeared as Surāqah ibn Mālik ibn Jushʿum al-Mudlijī and told the Quraysh, *'No one can overcome you today while I am your defender.' But when the two hosts saw each other, he turned on his heels and said, 'I have nothing to do with you! I see what you see not. I fear Allah, and Allah is severe in retribution'* (8:48).
[Second,] he appeared on the Day of ʿAqabah in the form of Munabbih ibn al-Ḥajjāj and shrieked, "Muḥammad and his hooligans are at ʿAqabah! Catch them!" Then the Messenger of God told the Helpers, "Fear not; his voice shall not reach them."
[Third,] he appeared on the day when the Quraysh gathered at Dār al-Nadwah in the form of an old man from Najd and

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participated in their counsel. Then God revealed: *[Remember] when those who rejected faith plotted against you, to capture you or kill you or expel you. They plotted, and Allah plotted—and Allah is the best of plotters* (8:30).

[Fourth,] he appeared the day that the Messenger of God died in the form of al-Mughīrah ibn Shuʿbah and said, "O people! Do not make an emperor or king like the Persians or Romans! Spread out power so it does not fall back to Banū Hāshim while they wait for their women to get pregnant and give birth [to heirs].

(18) *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* says:

When they met [for battle], Iblīs was among the enemy lines. Ḥārith ibn Hishām grasped his hand, whereupon he whirled about.

"Surāqah, where are you going?" al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām asked. "Are you betraying us in this situation?"

"I see what you do not see."

"By God, I only see those boys from Yathrib."

Shoving al-Ḥārith away, Surāqah took off, and they lost.

When they returned to Mecca, they said, "Surāqah made us lose."

Surāqah protested, "By God, I had no idea you had marched to battle until I heard about your defeat."

They said, "You came to us that day and swore an oath to them."

Then, when they became Muslim, they realized that this had been Satan.

Majmaʿ al-Bayān says:

This is also narrated from Abū Jaʿfar [Imām al-Bāqir] and Abū ʿAbdillāh [Imām al-Ṣādiq].

Author's comments: Ibn Shahrāshūb relates something similar from them both. Many Sunni narrations, from Ibn ʿAbbās and others, also share this meaning.

Previously, we discussed how some exegetes consider this unlikely and deem these narrations weak. However, these narrations affirm something which is possible, not something impossible. There is no logical reason why Satan cannot take human form. It is not unusual for liminal

(*barzakhiyyah*) forms to manifest. Therefore, there is no reason to insist that this is impossible. While one also cannot insist that it the correct interpretation, it best fits the literal meaning of the verse.

(19) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, regarding 8:48-8:49 (*When Satan made their deeds seem fair…*), it is related from Ibn Abī Ḥātim that Ibn Isḥāq said regarding *When the hypocrites and the sick-hearted said…* (8:49):

> They are a group that marched out with the Quraysh. Their fathers had imprisoned them and forced them to come out to battle while they harboured some doubts. When they saw how few companions the Prophet had, they said, "Those poor things got duped by their religion when they went out with so few against so many!" They were five members of the Quraysh: Qays ibn al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah al-Makhzūmī, Abu Qays ibn al-Fākih ibn al-Mughīrah al-Makhzūmī, al-Ḥārith ibn Zamʿah, ʿAlī ibn Umayyah ibn Khalaf, and al-ʿĀṣī ibn Munabbih.

Author's comments: While this does fit the expression *when the hypocrites and the sick-hearted said* (8:49), other exegetes hold that the hypocrites were the ones who said "*their religion has duped them*" (8:49), and the "sick-hearted" were a group of people from Medina who did not march forth to battle with the Prophet. However, the context of the verse suggests otherwise, since it indicates that they were present at the battle and said it when the two forces met.

Furthermore, a narration from Abū Hurayrah in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* from al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ* says about who said what:

ʿUtbah ibn Rabīʿah and the polytheists with him at Badr said, "*Their religion has duped them.*" Then, God revealed *When the hypocrites and the sick-hearted said, "Their religion has duped them*" (8:49).

However, this does not fit the verse, since the Qur'an never uses the expression "the polytheists" (*mushrikīn*) to speak of the hypocrites, nor of the sick-hearted.

(20) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is related from ʿAlī al-Maḥmūdī from his father, without a further chain of narration, regarding *smiting*

their faces and backs (8:50):
It means "their buttocks". God is decent and uses euphemisms.

(21) In *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī*, it is related from *al-Kāfī* from [Imām] al-Ṣādiq:
God raised one of His prophets among his people and revealed to him, "Tell your people that whenever a town or people obeyed Me, and I bestowed ease upon them, and they moved away from what I love to what I hate, I moved them from they love to what they hate. And whenever a town or household disobeyed me, and I afflicted them, and they moved from what I hate to what I love, I moved them from what they hated to what they loved."

(22) In *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfī*, it is also related that he [Imām al-Ṣādiq] said:
My father [Imām al-Bāqir] used to say, "God, the Mighty and Glorious, has firmly decreed that He will not bless a servant and then retract this blessing unless this servant commits a sin and merits punishment for it."

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Verses 55 to 66

These verses lay down rules for war, peace, treaties, and breaking treaties. The first part of the verses are in agreement with and can be applied to the situation regarding the Jewish tribes in and around Medina. After migrating to Medina, the Prophet made a treaty with them that they would not harm him, betray him, or aid enemies against him. In return, they would retain their religion and be safe. However, they broke this agreement time and time again, until God decreed war against them, and what happened, happened. Some narrations about this will be mentioned in the section on narrations, God willing.

With this in mind, the first four verses were not revealed at the same time as the verses preceding them. They have no link to them, as shown by the context. However, it is not clear whether or not the next seven verses are linked to the first four verses, or whether or not they are linked to the verses preceding this section.

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

(8:55) ***The vilest of beasts before Allah are those who reject [Him]; they will not believe.***

This declares them to doubtlessly be the worst of living beings, since the expression is conditioned by the phrase *before Allah* (ʿind Allāh), which expresses the divine decree, and the divine decree is inerrant: *My Lord neither errs nor forgets* (20:52).

This section commences by calling them *the vilest of beasts* because the verses are aimed at getting their shields up. *The vilest* shows that no good can be hoped for from them. Therefore, they must defend against them in any suitable, possible way. It is befitting to embark upon this discussion by classifying them as *the vilest beasts* as a prelude to the next verse: *So if you come upon them in war, use them to scatter those who will come after them* (8:57).

Those who reject [Him] (alladhīna kafarū) and *they will not believe*

(fa-hum lā yuʾminūn) is a subject-predicate combination, in which the conjunction *fāʾ* denotes cause and effect. It is because of their rejection (*kufr*) that they will not believe, not the other way around; that is, faithlessness does not necessarily engender rejection (*kufr*), unless it is already so firmly rooted in the soul that it cannot be weeded out. Should that happen, there is no hope of them attaining faith in the heart. This is the situation with respect to the two opposites of rejection (*kufr*) and faith (*īmān*).

From here, it is clear that *those who reject [Him]* refers specifically to those people in whose hearts rejection (*kufr*) is established. Hereupon, the meaning of this verse refers back to its sister-verses beforehand:

> *The vilest of beasts before Allah are the deaf and dumb bereft of understanding. Had Allah known of any good in them, He would have made them hear. But if He had made them hear, they would have turned away in rejection.* (8:22-23).

In addition to that, since both verses indicate that the worst beings before God are this specific group, the first verse says that they will never have faith—ever. From this, it can be understood that when the second verse speaks about *those who reject [Him]; they will not believe*, it is also speaking about that specific group; that is, it is saying that rejection (*kufr*) is so affixed in their hearts that it can never be uprooted.

الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتَ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَهُمْ فِي كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ وَهُمْ لَا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

> **(8:56)** ***Those whom you make an agreement with*** **(minhum)***, then they break their agreement each time, and are not wary.*

This verse either expands upon *those who reject* in the previous verse, or else discusses the same people by identifying a subset of them [the treaty-violators]. Thus, *min* in *minhum* is partitive (*tabʿīḍiyyah*) meaning: "the specific group among the rejectors whom you made a treaty with." The possibility of *min* to mean *maʿa* (with) making the sentence to read as "those you made a treaty with," or being superfluous, is insignificant.

Each time means that, time and time again, the "allies" violated the pact. When they violate their agreements, they fear neither God nor yourselves. They are not afraid to break their treaties. This indicates that they violated these pacts repeatedly.

فَإِمَّا تَثْقَفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْحَرْبِ فَشَرِّدْ بِهِمْ مَنْ خَلْفَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

(8:57) ***So if you come upon them*** **(fa-immā tathqafannahum)** ***in war, use them to scatter those*** **(fa-sharrid bihim)** ***who will come after them, that they might be reminded.***

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According to *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, *thaqaf* means "to vanquish and come upon them speedily", and *tashrīd* means "to scatter in panic".

So if you come upon them **(fa-immā tathqafannahum)*:*** The root expression here is *in tathqafahum*. *Mā* is then added to *in*—which is a conditional particle—for emphasis so that the emphatic *-n* suffix can be added to the conditional expression, thereby making it emphatic.

Scatter those who will come after them: Means, to give them a sound wallop to teach a lesson to the next lot, so they will quake in their boots and disperse. Their resolve will weaken, as will their unity of intent to slay the faithful and obliterate the word of truth.

With this in mind, *that they may be reminded* expresses the hope that they might think twice about breaking treaties, running amuck in the land, and diverging from the word of truth—that they might take heed of the ill consequences. For God does not guide a hypocritical folk, nor does He support traitors' plots.

The verse hints at a command to fight them, then pummel them, then harangue them upon victory. It hints that others like them are on their way, who will break their treaties and lay ambushes against the truth and its devotees.

وَإِمَّا تَخَافَنَّ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً فَانْبِذْ إِلَيْهِمْ عَلَىٰ سَوَاءٍ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَائِنِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

(8:58) ***And if you fear treachery from a people, then throw back [their covenant] to them so as to be on equal terms. Allah loves not the treacherous.***

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According to *Majmaʿ [al-Bayān]*, *khiyānah* means "to break a treaty that has been ratified". This meaning is only for treaties and pacts. In a general sense, *khiyānah* can be used with respect to violating the provisions

of any sort of covenant or guarantee of security. *Nabdh* means "to throw", and is used in the verse: *they cast it behind their backs* (3:187). *Sawāʾ* means *istawāʾ* ("fairness", "equity").

And if you fear parallels *so if you come upon them* in the previous verse. *Fear* (khawf) is defined as the appearance of signs that danger is about to befall: get your guard up! *Allah loves not the treacherous* elaborates on *throw back [their covenant] to them so as to be on equal terms*.

This verse means: If you make a treaty with a group of people and fear that they will renege on it, throw it back at them. Let them know the treaty has been abolished, so you can be on equal footing. It is only fair that you both treat each other the same way. However, if you attack them before the treaty has been abolished, this would be treachery, and God does not love traitors.

These two verses (8:57-58) summarize divine strictures regarding fighting those who you do not have any sort of treaty with (that they might then break), as well as the rejectors who you made a treaty with but fear they will break it, since they have not upheld any prior agreement. It is thereby incumbent upon the rightful leader (*walī al-amr*) to deal them a harsh blow. If you fear treachery from them, and that they will not adhere to the terms of their agreement, then let them know that it has been abolished; then, fight them. But do not start fighting them before informing them that the treaty has been abolished; otherwise, this would be treachery. However, if you make a treaty with a group, and they do not violate it or give you any cause to think that they will violate it, then you must respect the terms of that treaty. God says: *Observe the treaty with them to the end of the term* (9:4) and *Fulfill your pacts* (5:1).

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَبَقُوا ۚ إِنَّهُمْ لَا يُعْجِزُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

(8:59) *Let not those who disbelieve think* (yaḥsabanna) *they shall take the lead* (sabaqū)*; they shall thwart nothing* (lā yuʿjizūn).

The more common recitation of this verse says *taḥsabanna*, and the less common says *yaḥsabanna*.[1] The common recitation of *taḥsabanna*,

1 *Yaḥsabanna* is the recitation of Ḥafṣ, Ibn ʿĀmir, Ḥamzah, and Abu Jaʾfar al-Bāqir. The rest have recited *taḥsabanna.* [Ed.]

beginning with *t-* denoting the second person, is addressed to the Prophet to gladden his soul and strengthen his heart, like some previous verses, such as: *O Prophet! Allah suffices you and the faithful who follow you.* (8:64) This is similar to the succeeding verse telling the Prophet to urge on the faithful: *O Prophet! Urge the believers to fight* (8:65).

Sabaq means "to outrace" or "to come out ahead". *Iʿjāz* means "being incapacitated". *They shall thwart nothing* explains *let not those who disbelieve think*. It means: O Prophet! Do not think that those who reject faith will outrace Us, and We shall not reach them. They are not able to incapacitate God, since He has power over all things.

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَآخَرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ ۚ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

(8:60) ***Prepare against them*** **(wa aʿiddū lahum)** ***what force*** **(quwwatin)** ***you can, and horses tethered*** **(ribāṭ al-khayl)*, to frighten thereby*** **(tarhabūna bihi)** ***the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them, whom you do not know. Allah knows them. Whatever you spend in Allah's way will be paid back to you fully, and you shall not be treated unjustly.***

Iʿdād means to ready the accoutrements needed to accomplish an aim (in this case, victory): to find what one needs to actualize one's goals. For instance, one might gather wood and fuel for a fire in order to cook. *Quwwah* is anything that can be used to carry out an act. In war, it can be used for mounts, armor, weaponry, trained soldiers, and wartime pacts—whatever is necessary. *Ribāṭ* is the intensive form of *rabṭ* ("tying"), meaning "binding". Grammatically, it is conjugated as *rabaṭahu*, *yarbiṭahu* and *yarbuṭahu*, *raṭb*, *rābaṭahu*, *yurābiṭahu*, *murābiṭah*, and *ribāṭ*. *Rabṭ* and *ribāṭ* mean the same thing, except that *ribāṭ* means to tie more firmly. *Khayl* means "horses". *Irhāb* is similar in meaning to *takhwīf* ("frighten").

Prepare against them **(wa aʿiddū lahum)** ***what force*** **(quwwatin)** ***you can, and horses tethered:*** This is an overarching command for the faithful to amass their war-strength—their equipment, manpower and whatever

else they need to face down an enemy, whether that enemy be present yet or not. It expresses the reality that humankind is always comprised of various individuals and groups of bickering natures and ideologies. Furthermore, there will always be another society working against its greater good and opposing its ways. Unable to coexist freely forever, eventually, war will break out, and one side will win.

Thus, there is no escape from the fangs of war or the clashes impelling it. We witness this impulse in the nature of the human being, in that the human being has inbuilt faculties that serve no purpose except for defence, such as anger, bulky muscles, and the ability to plot and connive for victory. Therefore, the Islamic society must naturally muster its defences: it must ready its forces, its armies, and its tethered horses in case an enemy decides to attack the righteous society.

As for what God has chosen for the Islamic society—through revealing the inborn (*fiṭrī*) religion, which is the right religion—it is a means of managing human society which protects the rights of each and every individual in the society. It observes the best interests of the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor, the free and the slave, the man and the woman, the individual and the group, the part and the whole. It does this equally, rather than devolving to despotism and the whims of a tyrant shedding the blood of his people and tinkering with their wealth. It is also not a situation of majority rule, where half the population can deprive the other half and work against their best interests, if they just add one person to their numbers.

Possibly, this is the secret behind *Prepare against them what force you can* (8:60). This verse is addressed to the people, whereas the previous verses were addressed to the Prophet, such as *So if you come upon them in war, use them to scatter those who will come after them* (8:57) and *then throw back [their covenant] to them so as to be on equal terms* (8:58), as are the succeeding verses, beginning with *If they incline to peace, incline to it* (8:61).

This is because the Islamic government is a human government, meaning that it looks after each individual, and honors and respects their will. That is to say, it does not act solely on the basis of a single ruler, or the majority view.

Therefore, when enemies loom, they threaten the best interests of each and every individual in the society. Therefore, each and every individual must rise in defense, mustering whatever power they can to avoid being laid waste. Even though governments are really the ones that can amass mighty armies, there are things that individuals can do, such as learning military science and training in martial arts. Therefore, it is in fact a responsibility on all.

To frighten thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them, whom you do not know. Allah knows them: This elaborates on *prepare against them*, meaning: ready your forces against them to strike terror into the hearts of the enemy of God, and your enemy. They are called the "enemy of God" because this is the reality; also, it urges them to act on this.

Others besides them, whom you do not know: This shows that the first group of people who are mentioned are the known enemies of the faithful. However, this expression—*others beside them, whom you do not know*—when taken literally, indicates that the faithful must also be wary of other enemies, such as the hypocrites, who clad themselves in the garb of faith. They make a show of praying, fasting, performing hajj, and doing jihad. Apart from the hypocrites, they must also be on the lookout for those who are against the faith (the *kuffār*) and who are ceaseless in their enmity.

Scaring off the enemy is done through a show of force.[1] Building this strength is a suitable goal, in and of itself. However, the verse also says: *Whatever you spend in Allah's way will be paid back to you fully, and you shall not be treated unjustly.* This latter part indicates that there are combined aims and objectives behind this injunction.

This is because the true goal behind building the maximum possible military strength and defensive forces and protecting society, lives, women [from assault], and wealth from looming enemies is to protect the religion by extinguishing the flames of corruption which destroy the word of truth and fell the edifices of the innate religion (*dīn al-fiṭrah*), through which God is worshipped on His earth, and through which justice is establish among His servants [that is, human beings].

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1 The best defense is a good offense! [Trans.]

This is a matter which benefits every member of the Islamic society. Whenever an individual or group spends in the way of God—that is, for jihad in order to keep the religion alive—whatever they spend will be returned to them, even if it is in a different form. So if they offer wealth, status, or any blessing of this sort, they are really spending on the necessities of life and will find it paid back to them quickly, in addition to its growth that will follow in this world and the hereafter. If they give their lives in the way of God and become martyrs, they enjoy a true eternal existence for which everyone should strive. This is what Islam teaches about what happens after martyrdom. However, this is not true if they give their lives for the sake of glory or fame, in order for their names to remain alive in this world. So, even if they are aware today of this Islamic teaching, and that society is like a single soul whose members share in the benefits and harms that are related to it, but they failed in their path and the matter became ambiguous for them in the identification of human perfection which is enjoyment of the eternal bliss: something which is demanded by their inner nature (*fiṭrah*) and invites them to social life. They are confused about that perfection and took it for the current life, and the path became straitened for them in matters like sacrificing one's self in order for others to enjoy the pleasures of the material life.

Therefore, amassing military strength is serves a practical purpose of protecting the rights of the Islamic society and making a defensive show of force against the enemy, *to frighten thereby the enemy of Allah*. From this angle, building defenses serves the society. However, *whatever you spend in Allah's way will be paid back to you fully, and you shall not be treated unjustly* is a reminder that whatever anyone spends in the way of God does not go to waste and is not lost; rather, it is returned back to the spender, so that no one's right is lost.

Therefore, *whatever you spend in Allah's way* is a more general expression than the verse *and whatever you spend for good shall be repaid to you* (2:272). This is because the word *khayr* here denotes wealth and does not include offering one's life. However, *whatever you spend in Allah's way* is more comprehensive.

وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٦١﴾

(8:61) ***If they incline*** **(janaḥū)** ***to peace*** **(salm)*****, incline to it and trust in Allah; He is the hearing, the knowing.***

According to *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*,

> *Junūḥ* means "inclining". The word *janāḥ* is used for birds' wings because they use them to incline from one side to the other. The expression *lā junāḥ ʿalayh* ("there is no sin on him") means that the person is not inclining towards a sin.

Salm and *silm* mean peace.

Trust in Allah: This wraps up the command to incline [towards peace]. Altogether, it is one command [to incline to peace, while trusting in God]. It means: If they incline towards reconciliation and mutual harmony, then incline towards that and trust in God about that. Do not worry that they will secretly plot against you while you are heedless and unprepared, for God is the Hearing, the Knowing. He is not unaware of what happens via natural causes, and He is not rendered ineffective by deception. Rather, He shall aid and suffice you. This is what He affirms in the next verse: *If they intend to deceive you: Allah suffices you. He it is who strengthened you with His help and with the believers* (8:62).

Previously, we said that "trust in God" (*tawakkul ʿalā Allāh*) does not mean to abandon visible, natural causes. Rather, it means that one should not rely absolutely on the visible, natural causes, since the human being only sees part of the picture, not all of it. The fullest cause (*al-sabab al-tāmm*) involved in an effect is everything that exerts the divine will.

Trusting in God means relying on the fact that universal causes (*asbāb ʿāmmah*) rotate around the axis of His will. This does not mean that the one who is trusting in God should neglect the natural causes; that would be embarking on ignorance.

وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا أَنْ يَخْدَعُوكَ فَإِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللَّهُ ۚ هُوَ الَّذِي أَيَّدَكَ بِنَصْرِهِ
وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾

(8:62) ***If they intend to deceive you: Allah suffices you. He it is who strengthened you with His help and with the believers.***

This verse is linked to what comes before it. It answers an implied

question that could be put forward. That is, God is telling the Prophet to incline towards peace, but what if the enemy is just being treacherous and only pretending to want peace? Treachery is part of human reality, and God dislikes traitors. Thus, the command to incline towards peace is given with the assumption of this lurking suspicion. God answers that by telling them to trust in Him. If the other side tries to deceive them, God will suffice them. God says: *Whoever trusts in Allah, Allah suffices him; Allah attains His purpose* (65:3).

This also indicates that hidden causes lie behind natural, ordinary causes. These hidden causes support the best interest of the servant who trusts in God, even if he is betrayed through natural causes and not aided in seeking his right.

He it is who strengthened you with His help and with the believers: This provides a rationale and evidence for *Allah suffices you*. That is, God has already aided him [the Prophet] and the faithful, and united their warring hearts.

وَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ ۚ لَوْ أَنْفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَا أَلَّفْتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾

(8:63) ***And united*** **(allafa)** ***their hearts. Had you spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts, but Allah united them; He is mighty, wise.***

Al-Rāghib says:

> *Ilf* [the root of *allafa*] means "to unite with love." One can say *ullifat baynahum* ("goodwill was put between them"). The word *ulfah* ("friendship", "harmony") comes from it. The words *ilf* and *ālif* mean *maʾlūf* ("accustomed", "familiarity"). God says: *when you were enemies, and Allah united (*allafa*) your hearts* (3:103).

In one fell swoop, God proves how He suffices those who trust in Him. He sufficed His prophet by uniting the hearts of the faithful and aiding them. It is an axiomatic statement which applies to all of the faithful, even if the verse is presented in the context of the Helpers, through whom God aided His Prophet, since they sheltered and helped him, and God made them amenable to His religion. Age-old wars had ravaged them, such

as the Battle of Bughāth[1] between the Aws and the Khazraj tribes, until, upon the advent of Islam, their houses reconciled, and, by the grace of God, they became brethren.

In several parts of the Qur'an, God emphasizes how He united the hearts of the Muslims and declares the magnitude of this, such as in: *Had you spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts, but Allah united them; He is mighty, wise* (8:63).

This is because the human being is born with a love of worldly boons which he uses for his life. In truth, he wants nothing else. He seeks nothing but the things that will benefit himself. Sometimes, he may also wish to help someone else. However, scrutinizing this impulse deeply reveals that he still, ultimately, is looking out for himself. He loves acquisition and hates deprivation.

The human being navigates life through these two instinctive tendencies, love and hate. Were he to love everything, even opposites at odds with each other, life would cease. And were he to hate everything, even conflicting opposites, life would also cease. God placed this instinctive nature (*fiṭrah*) in the communal life of human being since human beings lack the individual strength or tools to take care of all of their needs in life. Therefore, it is necessary for people to form communities, and this must necessarily result in differentiation. As a result, each individual lacks certain things that he might want but which others enjoy, such as wealth, prestige, adornment, handsomeness, and all the other things that human nature impels people to wrangle over, or the things which take his fancy and which one can enjoy more or less of.

This is the root of enmity between hearts and miserliness between individuals. Then, this spread among them through various forms of deprivation: tyranny, aggression, and mutual hatred; bloodshed, theft of property and virtue, and the other things which people eagerly grapple

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1 Also known as the Battle of Buʿāth. The Battle of Bughāth, or Buʿāth, was the last battle between the Aws and the Khazraj and took place southeast of Medina around 617 CE. It involved an alliance of the Khazraj, their Bedouin allies, and the Jewish Qaynuqāʿ, and an alliance of the Aws, their Bedouin allies, the Jewish Naḍīr and Qurayẓah, and two smaller Jewish tribes, the Thaʿlaba and the Zaʿūrāʾ, both of Ghassānid origin. [Trans.]

over. All this hatred and aggression leaves an impact on the inner self.

These characteristics and instincts reside in the group. Before long, they manifest in their actions and come into contact between each other as they progress throughout life, leading to grief, strife, and social upheavals. People die; crops and generations are lost—an age-old story.

Whenever a society assumes that its only goal in coming together was material prosperity which is limited to the life of this world, it becomes impossible to uproot this corruption. For the world is the abode of competition, and—as we said—societies necessarily lead to differences between individuals. Individuals have varying capacities, and are affected by accidents, influences, and inner and outer circumstances, which then impact their lives and their livelihoods. God says:

> *Surely man is created of a hasty temperament, Being greatly grieved when evil afflicts him, And niggardly when good befalls him.* (70:19-21)

> *Most surely (man's) self is wont to command (him to do) evil* (12:53)

> *And they shall continue to differ.* (11:118)

Other verses say similar things.

When attempting to instill goodwill between people who would otherwise be at each other's throats, the highest possible goal is for people to be content with their own circumstances, or else to be at peace with the idea of handing over what they love—wealth, position, and other worldly things—to others. This helps to alleviate individual cases of differences. However, there is no way to wholly erase deep-set animosity through giving, since it does not uproot the burning instinct to acquire and hoard, which all people have, as we see from the way people treat each other.

Furthermore, some things—like kingship or top leadership—can only be by enjoyed by a single individual. Even high-class, sophisticated civilizations could not cure this ill and tame the lust for power so that the smoking remains of their societies could get relief from it. When people hate the king, because he is the only one who can be king—this hatred flares up in their hearts and eats them alive.

This is with respect to what happens internally in a society. As for other societies, they do not take an interest in their material well-being

unless it is also in their best interest, even if they are beset by hardships and disasters.

God blessed the Muslim nation through removing hatred from people and uniting their hearts through knowing the divine. He taught that to them and spread among them the teaching that the human life is eternal, not limited to these few days which soon perish, after which the human being disappears and is forgotten. Happiness in this eternal life does not depend on material pleasures or consumption. Rather, it is a true life with true sustenance, in which the human being subsists in the honor of worshipping God, the Exalted, basking in nearness to Him. He makes use of the worldly provisions which come to him through serendipity, or hard work, knowing the rights upon these blessings. Then he returns to his Lord and enters His pleasure, mixing there with the righteous servants of God. He thus lives a true life. As God says:

The life of this world is nothing but fleeting enjoyment. (13:26)

And this life of the world is nothing but amusement and play. The next abode is the real life—if they only knew. (29:64)

Therefore, a Muslim must have faith in his Lord and develop himself through the educational process of the divine teachings. He must gather his resolve make his desire for that which is with his Lord. For a sharp servant of God knows that he does not control benefit or harm, death or life, or the resurrection. A person who is like this has no concern but his Lord, in whose hands are good and ill, benefit and harm, riches and poverty, death and life. He must tread the path of life with beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds. When he receives things that he likes in this world, he understands that it is a gift from his Lord. When he is deprived of something, he knows that there is recompense for it with his Lord, and that what is with his Lord is more lasting and better.

This does not negate the importance of natural causes or the instinct to work and earn which, through spurring thinking and will, impels people to work hard to get their lives in order. Natural causes are linked to earning and attaining wholesome goals. We have discussed this in various sections throughout our book.

If Muslims follow this divinely ordained path, and try to turn their

hearts' desires from mere material pleasures and aims to spiritual enjoyment and provisions—which there is no competition over and there is no deprivation in—enmity will be lifted from their hearts, and their souls will be purified of avarice and wrangling over whims. By the blessing of God, they shall become brethren. They shall be truly victorious. God says:

> *O you who believe! Mind Allah with the care which is due to Him, and do not die unless you are Muslims. And hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited, and remember the favor of Allah on you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favor you became brethren; and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it, thus does Allah make clear to you His communications that you may follow the right way.* (3:103)

> *Whoever is preserved from the miserliness of his soul, these it is that are the successful ones.* (59:9)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَسْبُكَ اللَّهُ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

> (8:64) ***O Prophet! Allah suffices you and the faithful who follow you.***

This is to uplift the Prophet's spirits. Previously, God said: *He it is who strengthened you with His help and with the believers* (8:62). Here, "God sufficing you" means—and God knows best—that God aided the Prophet and his faithful followers. It does not mean that there are two sufficient causes or a sufficient cause with two parts consisting of one sufficient cause, since that would be against Qur'anic *tawḥīd*.

Possibly, it could be said that it means *Allah suffices you*, and that *the faithful who follow you* is appended to *suffices* via the conjunction *and*.

In any case, both the context of the verse and external evidence situate this verse in the context of urging them to fight, since the first thing that springs to mind when considering the impact of God sufficing them is that it relates to the battlefield.

Some exegetes say that the verse was revealed in the desert before the Battle of Badr. Therefore, it is not linked with the verses after it, and it is also not certain that it is linked to the verses before it.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ ۚ إِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ عِشْرُونَ صَابِرُونَ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

(8:65) ***O Prophet! Urge*** **(ḥarriḍ)** ***the believers to fight. If you have twenty patient ones, they will overcome two-hundred, and if you have one hundred, they shall overcome one thousand of those who reject faith, because they are a people who do not understand.***

Taḥrīḍ, *taḥḍīḍ*, *targhīb*, *ḥaḍḍ*, and *ḥathth* all mean the same thing ("urging", "prodding", "encouraging", "inciting", "exhorting").

If you have twenty patient ones, they will overcome two-hundred: Meaning, they will overcome two-hundred of the faithless. Next, it speaks of a thousand of the faithless.

If you have one hundred, they shall overcome one thousand of those who reject faith: Meaning, a hundred of the faithful, just as twenty of the faithful were referred to previously.

Because they are a people who do not understand: Rhetorically, the *bāʾ* expresses causality (*sababiyyah*) or through what means it was done. The clause itself explains why *they shall overcome*; that is, why twenty patient people will overcome two hundred of the faithless, and why one hundred patient people shall overcome a thousand of the faithless. It is because they are a people who do not understand.

The faithless being bereft of understanding, and the faithful being the opposite, is why one of the faithful equals ten of the faithless, as the verse prescribes. For the faithful are gifted certain things through their faith, such as unparalleled, unshakable strength—a different kind of strength stemming from a true understanding which grants them virtues such as bravery, gallantry, boldness, rectitude, solemnity, tranquillity, trust in God, and certainty that they will meet one of two good ends: either they will be killed and end up in Paradise, or shall fight and end up in Paradise, whereas the faithless see death as the final end, although there is no evidence for that.

However, the faithless rely on their own fancies and set store in Satan's delusions. Those who trust in their own fancies cannot reach their ultimate

aims, even if they sometimes reach their aims, for the shade of death—in their mind, extinction—always looms over them. How rare it is for a soul to stand firm in the face of these delusions: to free itself from the shadow of death while insisting on this mode of thought! Rather, flaps to and fro at the slightest wind, especially the face of terror and fright. History shows this with the defeat of the polytheists at Badr: after seventy of them, they turned heel, even though there were a thousand of them—nearly a one to fourteen ratio. Fourteen men fled on account of one man. This is only because of the understanding that the faithful had, which brought with it knowledge and faith, whereas the ignorance of the faithless brought with it faithlessness and futility.

الْآنَ خَفَّفَ اللَّهُ عَنْكُمْ وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ فِيكُمْ ضَعْفًا ۚ فَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ ۚ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أَلْفٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفَيْنِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

(8:66) ***Presently, Allah has lightened your burden, and knows there is weakness among you. So if you have a hundred patient ones, they shall overcome two hundred, and if you have a thousand, they shall overcome two thousand, by the permission of Allah. And Allah is with the patient.***

Meaning that if you have a hundred patient men, you shall overcome two hundred of the faithless, and if you have a thousand patient men, you shall overcome two thousand of the faithless, in accordance with what was said in the previous verse.

And knows there is weakness among you: "Weakness" here refers to spiritual weakness; that is, weakness of faith. For certainty in the truth is what bestows all the virtuous traits which lead to victory, such as bravery, patience, and right thought. It does not refer to weakness in numbers or military strength since, during the time of the Prophet, the faithful were continuing to increase in numbers and military strength.

By the permission of Allah: This qualifies *they shall overcome*, meaning that their victory is subject to God's will, and also that they must be patient men. For that reason, it is clear that *and Allah is with the patient*

explains *permission* [in *by the permission of Allah*].

In the previous verse, *because they are a people who do not understand* explained the ruling [for the battlefield ratios]. Similarly, *Allah… knows there is weakness among you* and *Allah is with the patient* also explain the ruling. Lack of understanding, spiritual weakness, and lack of patience are external causes which doubtlessly impact victory. This shows that the ruling in these two verses is found upon the spiritual traits of both sides: the faithful and the faithless. While, in the first verse, the inner strength of the faithful is such that one faithful man vanquishes ten of the faithless, after some time, the second verse announces that *Allah has lightened your burden*. This is because, by that time, the average faithful man had lost eighty percent of his inner strength, and thus the numbers "twenty" and "two hundred" are changed to "one hundred" and "two hundred", and "one hundred" and "one thousand" are changed to "two hundred" and "two thousand".

A discerning look into the underlying causes of spiritual traits in human societies leads to the conclusion that settled societies and groups assembled for a specific material or religious goal initially meet obstacles and difficulties which obstruct their development from all sides. Therefore, they gird themselves to fight to achieve their goals. Their inner selves wake up to defend against these threats, and they sacrifice themselves and their wealth in the way of their aims.

They continue fighting, putting themselves on the line night and day. They gain strength and momentum, until they achieve some measure of independence in their lives. Then, when circumstances improve, their numbers and territory swell, and they establish themselves, they begin to reap the outcome of their efforts, and they taste ease and security, their inner flames which had impelled them to act begin to dampen.

Even if a community has few members, its members will still vary in their degrees of faith and noble spiritual dispositions: some will be stronger and some will be weaker. When the population increases, weakness of faith also increases, as do the number of those with a sickness in the heart. There will also be more hypocrites. Thus, the average level of spiritual strength among the common man will diminish. The scale, which once weighed heavy, will now swing light.

In this respect, there is no difference between religious or secular (*aḥzāb*) communities or alliances; this phenomenon is part of human nature and affects all societies equally. Experience shows that when groups form to carry out an important aim, while they are few in number, they are fiercer against rivals and intruders. Trials beset them, and trials are unparalleled in spurring people into action. However, when their numbers increase, their opponents decrease, and the barriers between them and their goal fall, they settle down and become less alert, less sharp.

Deep deliberation on the Prophet's battles sheds light on this. The Muslims won the Battle of Badr while they had only three-hundred odd raggedly outfitted men, whereas the faithless of the Quraysh boasted weapons and power. Each of the faithless had three or more times the clout, might, and warlust. But then, the Battle of Uḥud transpired as it did, followed by the Battles of Khandaq, Khaybar, and Ḥunayn, which was the most astounding of all. God speaks of it in such a way that leaves no doubt to the researcher:

> *When your great numbers made you vain, but they availed you nothing and the earth closed in on you notwithstanding its spaciousness, then you turned back retreating.* (9:25)

So the verse indicates, firstly, that the more that Islam outwardly grew in might and glory during the time of the Prophet, the spiritual prowess and level of faith, of the common Muslim shrank, as did their noble inner spiritual virtues, until it reached the point—a short or long time after the Battle of Badr—that these things diminished to a fifth of what they were, as alluded to in verses such as this:

> *It is not for a prophet to take captives until he subdues the land. You desire the fleeting things of this world, while Allah desires the hereafter [for you], and Allah is mighty, wise. Were it not for an ordinance from Allah that had already gone forth, an awful doom would have befallen you because of what you took.* (8:67-68)

Secondly, these two verses (8:65-66) appear to have been revealed simultaneously, even though they discuss the situation of the faithful at two different times. This is indicated by the second verse: *presently, Allah has lightened your burden*. However, the two verses measure the spiritual

clout of the faithful at two separate times [and are not only intended to provide the two rulings about battle-numbers]. The second verse is in the context of the measurement given in the first verse, and does not stand separately. The presence of two distinct rulings for two different times in the two verses does not necessitate that the two verses were actually revealed at different times.

Yes, were the verses restricted to pronouncing the ruling, then one would assume that the second was revealed after the first.

Thirdly, *presently, Allah has lightened your burden*—as we discussed—is in the context of two rulings, the first heavier than the second. Although the sentences are, grammatically, presented as statements, they act as commands. That is, the first verse tells the believers to fight the faithless as long as they have at least a one to ten ratio, whereas the second verse tells them to fight as long as they have at least a one to two ratio.

Although it is possible to dispute the principle which says "mitigation is valid when there is already a duty", there is no doubt here about the implication of the two verses. They convey two different rulings following each other in time, one of them mitigating the other verse.

Fourthly, the first verse says that the ruling is due to understanding, and the second verse says that the ruling is due to patience, although, both verses qualify the faithful fighters as being patient. This indicates that patience is a trait which allows one person to equal two, whereas understanding is a trait that allows one person to equal five of his like. If a person has both patience and understanding, that person would equal ten of his like! Patience is never absent from understanding, although understanding can be absent from patience.

Fifthly, patience is a must during combat, in any case.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*, regarding *Those whom you make an agreement with, then they break their agreement each time* (8:56), it says: They are the Jews of Banū Qurayẓah. The Messenger of God made a pact with them that they would not back his enemies. Then, they shunted weapons to the polytheists, and said, "We forgot." He made another pact with them, and they broke it and aided the

enemies against him during the Battle of Khandaq, while Kaʿb ibn al-Ashraf rode to Mecca and made an alliance with them.

Author's comments: This is also related from Ibn ʿAbbās and Mujāhid. It is also related from Saʿīd ibn Jubayr that this verse was revealed regarding six Jewish clans, one of whom was Ibn Tābūt.

In order to shed full light on what the verse is alluding to when it speaks of the Jews breaking agreements with the Prophet time and time again, and the ordeals they caused him, it is necessary to consider all that transpired between them and the Prophet, from the time he went to Medina to seven years after that.

Groups of Jews had migrated from their lands to the Ḥijāz, settled there, and build fortresses and citadels. Their numbers and wealth flourished, and they became influential. In the exegesis of 2:89[1] (*And when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have, and aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieve, but when there came to them that which they did not recognize, they disbelieved in him…*), we mentioned some narrations about how they had migrated to the Ḥijāz, settled around Medina, and predicted that the Prophet would arise there.

However, when the Prophet migrated to Medina and invited them to Islam, they disdained to have faith in him. Therefore, he made a written peace treaty with the Jews of Medina. They were comprised of three clans surrounding Medina: Banū Qaynuqāʿ, Banū al-Naḍr, and Banū Qurayẓah.

As for the Banū Qaynuqāʿ, they broke the treaty during the Battle of Badr. Then, the Prophet came to them twenty-odd days later—in mid-Shawwāl in 2 AH—and staunchly besieged their fortress for fifteen days. Then, they surrendered themselves, their wealth, their women, and their children to the Prophet, who ordered that they be tied up. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Abū ibn Salūl spoke to the Prophet on their behalf and said they were his allies, so the Prophet ceded them to him and told him to take them out of Medina and that they were not allowed to re-enter it. So he took them, their women, and their children to Adhruʿāt (Darʿā) in Syria. He took their wealth as spoils of war. They had six hundred fighters who were

1 In Volume 1 of the Arabic edition. [Trans.]

among the bravest of the Jews.

As for the Banū al-Naḍīr, they plotted against the Prophet when he went to them with some of his companions a some months after the Battle of Badr and asked them to help pay the blood-money for one or two men from the Kilābī tribe whom ʿAmr ibn Umayyah al-Ḍamrī had killed. They said, "Consider it done, O Abū al-Qāsim! Sit here until we take care of it." Then they conspired to kill him and chose ʿAmr ibn Jaḥāsh to clobber him on the head with a millstone. However, Salām ibn Mishkam warned them, "Do not do that, for, by God, he knows what you are planning, and this has broken the pact between us and them."

Then, revelation came. When his Lord told him what they were scheming, he leaped up and headed for Medina. His companions followed suit, asking what he was doing. He told them about the plot by Banū Naḍīr. Then, from Medina, he sent them a message, saying: "Leave Medina and do not live near me in it. I give you a short respite. If I find any of you here after that, I will strike his neck." They stayed for a few days, preparing to leave.

ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ubayy, the hypocrite, send them a message saying: "Do not leave your homes, for two thousand men are with me. They will enter your fortress with you and die for you. The Banū Qurayẓah and their allies from the Ghaṭafān will also come to your aid." This mollified them.

So their chief, Ḥuyayy ibn Akṭab, sent a message back to the Prophet, saying: "We will not leave our homes. Do whatever you want." The Prophet sounded the *takbīr*, as did his companions. He told ʿAlī to fly the banner and march towards them. So they swarmed around their dwellings. However, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ubayy betrayed them: neither the Banū Qurayẓah nor their allies from the Ghaṭafān came to their aid.

The Prophet had ordered that their date palms be cut down and burnt. Anxiously, they said, "O Muḥammad, do not cut them down; if they are yours, then take them, and if they are ours, then leave them to us."

Then, after a few days, they said, "O Muḥammad, we will leave your land; give us our property."

He said, "No, go. However, each of you can take a camel-load [of your property and wealth] with you." They did not accept that and remained for a few days neither here nor there. Then, they asked him the same thing

again. He said, "No. Go, and do not take anything at all with you. If we find any of you carrying anything, we will kill him." So they left. Some went to Fadak and Wādī al-Qurā, and others to Syria. Their property became *fiʾah* for God and His Messenger, rather than being ceded to the Muslim army. Their story is mentioned in Sūrah al-Ḥashr, as is the plot of Banū al-Naḍīr against the Prophet to ally the Quraysh, Ghaṭafān, and others against him.

As for the Banū Qurayẓah, they remained at peace with the Prophet until the Battle of Khandaq. Ḥuyayy ibn Akhṭab, the chief of the Banū al-Naḍīr, had ridden to Medina and instigated the Quraysh against the Prophet. Alliances were formed. Then, he rode to Banū Qurayẓah and came to them in their homes, tempting them and blandishing them and haranguing them. He spoke with their chief, Kaʿb ibn Asad, about that, about breaking the alliance [with the Prophet], and about fighting against the Prophet, until they agreed to that on the condition that he enter their fortress and share their fate. So he did.

Thus, they broke their pact with the Prophet, sided with the confederation which had surrounded Medina, insulted the Prophet, and caused other damage.

When the Prophet had finished with the allied forces, Gabriel came to him and revealed that God was commanding him to march towards them. So he moved towards the Banū Qurayẓah, while ʿAlī carried the banner, and they locked themselves into their fortress. He then besieged them for twenty-five days.

When their situation grew dire, their chief, Kaʿb ibn Asad, proposed three options: they could profess Islam and join the religion of Muḥammad; or they could kill their children, then rush out, swords drawn, and make a last stand—either they would win or every last one of them would be killed; or they could attack the Muslims on the Sabbath, when the Muslims felt they were secure.

However, they did not accept any of those options. Instead, they sent a message to the Prophet saying, "Send us Abū Lubābah ibn ʿAbd al-Mundhir. We shall take counsel with him regarding this situation." Abū Lubābah had their best interests in mind, since his wife and children were from their tribe, and his wealth was in their hands.

So they sent him to them. When they saw him, they stood, wailing, and said, "Should we surrender to Muḥammad?"

He said, "Yes," but he gestured towards his throat as if he was slitting it—they would be slaughtered.

[Later] Abū Lubābah said, "By God, my feet had barely moved from their place when I realized that I had betrayed God and His Messenger." Then God revealed to the Prophet what Abū Lubābah had done.

Full of regret, Abū Lubābah tied himself to a pillar in the mosque of Medina, begging God for forgiveness. He swore that he would die there unless the Prophet himself untied him. News of this reached the Prophet and he said, "Leave him there until God accepts his repentance." Then God revealed that his repentance had been accepted, so the Prophet untied him.

Then, the Banū Qurayẓah surrendered to the Prophet. Since they were allies (*mawālī*) of the Aws tribe, the Aws interceded for them and it was concluded that they be subjected to the judgment of Saʿd ibn Maʿādh al-Awsī. The Prophet agreed to that and brought Saʿd, although he was wounded.

When he spoke to Saʿd, may God have mercy upon him, about their matter, he said, "The time has come for Saʿd to pay no heed to anyone who lays blame on him in the way of God." Then he [Saʿd] ruled that their men should be killed, their women and children taken captive, and their wealth confiscated. Saʿd's verdict was carried out. Their necks were struck. Six or seven hundred men were killed; some say more. No one was spared apart from a group who had professed faith beforehand. ʿAmr ibn Saʿdī fled; he had not joined them in breaking the pact. All their women were taken captive apart from a single woman who was killed; she was the one who threw a millstone at the head of Khallād ibn al-Suwayd ibn al-Ṣāmit and killed him.

Then the Prophet expelled the Jews from Medina. Then he marched towards the Jews of Khaybar after they were scheming to rile up all the Arab tribes and form a coalition against him. He descended on their fortress and besieged them for some days. Then the Prophet sent Abū Bakr and a group of companions to fight them, but they were unvictorious. Then he sent ʿUmar and a group of companions, but they were unvictorious.

At that, the Prophet said, "Tomorrow, I shall give the banner to a man

who loves God and His Messenger, and whom God and His Messenger love. He shall be fierce and persistent, and he shall not flee; he shall not return until God brings victory through his hands." The next day, he gave the banner to ʿAlī and sent him to fight. He approached them and killed Marḥab, the famous horseman, defeated them, and with his bare hands tore off the gate of their fortress. God made them victorious at his hand. This was after the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah in Muḥarram, in the seventh year after the migration.

Then the Prophet expelled the remainder of the Jews. Before that, he had advised them to sell their property and take its equivalent in coins.

Thus concludes our overview of what transpired between the Jews and the Prophet.

(2) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, regarding the verse *The vilest of beasts before Allah…* (8:55), it is related from Jābir:

This was revealed regarding Banū Umayyah. They are the worst creations of God. In the deeper interpretation of the Qur'an, they are those *who reject [Him]*, and they are the ones who *will not believe.*

Author's comments: Al-Qummī relates something similar from Abū Ḥamzah, from him. It is part of the inner meaning of the Qur'an which is related through narrations, not the surface level understanding.

(3) In *al-Kāfī*, it is related in a chain of narration from Sahl ibn Ziyād, from "some of our companions", from ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sinān, that Imām al-Ṣadiq said:

The Messenger of God said, "Three traits make a person a hypocrite, even if they fast, pray, and swear they are a Muslim. First, when they are trusted with something, they betray it. Second, when they speak, they lie. Third, when they make a promise, they break it. God, the Mighty and Glorious, said in His Book: *Allah loves not the treacherous* (8:58). And He said: *the curse of Allah is upon whoever lies* (24:7). And He, the Mighty and Glorious, said: *And mention Ismāʿīl in the Book; he kept his promises and was a messenger sent* (19:54).

(4) In *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, regarding *Prepare against them what force you can* (8:60), it says:
Weaponry.

(5) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is related from Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā, from someone unspecified, that Imām al-Ṣādiq said regarding this verse (8:60):
Swords and shields.

(6) In *al-Faqīh*, it is related without a chain of narration that Imām al-Ṣādiq said regarding this verse (8:60):
Part of it [the preparations] is dyeing with a black dye.

(7) In *al-Kāfī*, it is related via a chain of narration from Jābir from Imām al-Bāqir:
A group of people went to al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī [Imām al-Sajjād] and saw that he was using black dye. They asked him about that, so he touched his beard and said, "In one of the battles, the Messenger of God commanded the fighters to use black dye to intimidate the polytheists."

(8) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is related from Jābir al-Anṣārī that the Messenger of God said:
Prepare against them what force you can (8:60)—arrows.

(9) It is related in *al-Kāfī*, *Rabīʿ al-Abrār*, and *al-Durr al-Manthūr*:[1]
I heard the Messenger of God saying, "When a single arrow is

1 In *al-Kafī*, is related via a chain of narration from ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Mughīrah, who attributes it without to the Prophet without a further chain of narration. It is related by al-Zamakhsahrī in *Rabīʿ al-Abrār* from ʿUqbah ibn ʿĀmir, from the Prophet. It is related by al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, from Aḥmad, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Abū al-Shaykh, Abū Yaʿqūb Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm, and al-Bayhaqī, from ʿUqbah ibn ʿĀmir al-Juhanī, from the Prophet. In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, al-Ḥākim (who declares it authentic), and al-Bayhaqī, from ʿUqbah ibn ʿĀmir al-Juhanī, from the Prophet. [Trans.]

fired, God shall put three people in Paradise: the one who made it (if he had a good intent), the one who equipped him with it for the sake of God, and the one who fired it in the way of God."
And he said, "Shoot [a bow] and ride; archery is better than horsemanship."
And he said, "Anything that amuses the son of Adam is futile, except for three things: archery, training horses, and enjoying one's self with one's spouse, for these things are rightful. Whoever learns how to shoot an arrow, then loses that skill, has denied a blessing [of God]."

Author's comments: Other narrations share the same meaning, especially regarding horses and archery. In any cases, these narrations [do not specify the specific reason why the verse was revealed by rather] are applications of its meaning.

(10) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related that the Prophet said regarding *others besides them, whom you do not know* (8:60):[1]
They are the jinn. Satan does not rob a person of his senses if he has a seasoned battle-horse on his property.

Author's comments: Other narrations express the same idea. In short, the narrations link *others beside them, whom you do not know* (8:60) with *horses tethered* (8:60). This is an application of the verse but is not its main meaning (*tafsīr*) in any way. The verse is clearly speaking about human enemies, like the faithless and the hypocrites.

(11) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from Ibn Mardawayh, from ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abzā:
The Prophet used to recite: *And if they incline towards peace (wa in janaḥū lil-silm)* (8:61).

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1 It is related from Saᶜd, al-Ḥarith ibn Abī Usāmah, Abu Yaᶜlā, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Qāniᶜ in *al-Muᶜjam*, al-Ṭabarānī, Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn Mandah, al-Rūyānī in his *Musnad*, Ibn Mardawayh, and Ibn ᶜAsākir from Yazīd ibn ᶜAbd Allāh ibn Gharīb, from his father, from his grandfather, from the Prophet. [Trans.]

(12) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Abū ʿUbayd, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Ibn Mardawayh relate from Ibn ʿAbbās regarding *and if they incline towards peace, incline to it* (8:61):
This was abrogated by the verse: *Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, out of those who have been given the Book, until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of superiority and they are in a state of subjection.* (9:29)

Author's comments: It is also narrated that verse 8:61 was abrogated by *slay the idolaters wherever you find them* (9:5, the verse of *barāʾah* or repudiation). Verse 8:61 is not bereft of a hint at another forthcoming ruling when it says *if they incline to peace, incline to it and trust in Allah; He is the hearing, the knowing* (8:61).

(13) In *al-Kāfī*, it is related via a chain of narration from al-Ḥalabī, regarding the verse *if they incline to peace, incline to it* (8:61):
Imām al-Ṣādiq was asked, "What is peace?"
He replied, "They become loyal to us [the Imams]."
(Another narration says, "They become loyal to you [that is, what you are loyal to; that is, *wilāyah* to the Imāms]."

Author's comments: This is an example of the application of the verse.

(14) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn ʿAsākir relates from Abū Hurayrah:
On the [divine] throne, it is written, "There is no God but Me—alone, with no partner. Muḥammad is My servant and messenger. I aided him with ʿAlī." That is the import of the verse: *He it is who strengthened you with His help and with the believers* (8:62).

Author's comments: Al-Ṣadūq relates this in *Maʿānī al-Akhbār* with a chain of narration from Abū Hurayrah, as does Abū Nuʿaym in *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, with a chain of narration from him. Ibn Shahrāshūb also relates it via a chain of narration from Anas, from the Prophet.

(15) In *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, it is related that Sharaf al-Dīn al-Najafī said:
In *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, Abu Nuʿaym mentions its deeper

interpretation with a chain of narration from Abū Hurayrah. He said: "This verse (*He it is who strengthened you with His help and with the believers*, 8:62) was revealed about ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib; *the believers* refers to him."

Author's comments: The wording of the verse does not support this unless "following" (in *the faithful who follow you*, 8:64) speaks only of the one who followed the Prophet absolutely, with no quarrel whatsoever [that is to say, ʿAlī], and *min* is partitive rather than descriptive—if the context supports that.

(16) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, al-Bazzār relates that Ibn ʿAbbās said:

When ʿUmar accepted Islam, the polytheists said, "Today, they [the Muslims] have taken vengeance on us." Then, God revealed: *O Prophet! Allah suffices you and the faithful who follow you.* (8:64)

Author's comments: Another narration conveys a similar meaning. However, reflecting on the statement does not bolster it, since at the time when ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭab converted to Islam, the Muslims could not have been addressed in such a manner (*O Prophet! Allah suffices you and the faithful who follow you*, 8:64). It was a time of hardship and trials. This persisted for years. The Prophet, at that time, was not in need of military support. Furthermore, narrations indicate that ʿUmar was the fortieth or forty-fourth person to convert to Islam.

In any case, the verse appears to have been revealed in Medina, along with the other verses of Sūrah al-Anfāl.

(17) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Abū Ḥātim relate from al-Zuhrī regarding *O Prophet! Allah suffices you and the faithful who follow you* (8:64):

This was revealed regarding the Helpers.

Author's comments: The context of the verse does not lend support to this interpretation, as with the previous two narrations—O God!—unless it means to say that it was revealed on the day that the Helpers professed belief and swore allegiance to the Prophet. However, the apparent meaning of the verse indicates it was revealed to gladden the spirit of the Prophet through all of the faithful alongside him, both the Helpers

and the Migrants. It paves the way for the next verse, which commands and urges the faithful to fight.

(18) *Tafsīr al-Qummī* says:

> In the early years of the prophethood, the companions of the Prophet were commanded to fight the faithless with a one-to-ten battle-ratio. Anyone who fled was a deserter; a hundred could overtake a thousand. Then God knew that some of them were weak and could not bear that, so God revealed: *Presently, Allah has lightened your burden, and knows there is weakness among you. So if you have a hundred patient ones, they shall overcome two hundred…* (8:66). Thus, they were commanded to fight if there was a one-to-two battle-ratio or better; anyone who fled situation was a deserter. If there were three enemies per Muslim and they fled, this was not deserting.

Author's comments: In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, something similar is related from al-Ḥuysan ibn Ṣālih, from [Imām] al-Ṣādiq, from ʿAlī. Something similar is also related in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, through several chains of narration, from Ibn ʿAbbās, and others.

(19) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from al-Shīrāzi (in *al-Alqāb*), Ibn ʿUday, and al-Ḥakim (who declares it to be authentic) that Ibn ʿUmar said:

> The Messenger of God used to recite the word *weakness* (dāʿf) in *presently, Allah has lightened your burden, and knows there is weakness among you* (8:66) in the nominative case.

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Verses 67 to 71

Here, God reproves [the Muslims] who fought at Badr for taking some of the idolators captive and suggesting to the Prophet that, rather than kill them, they take them for ransom to better their situation and fortify themselves against the enemies of the faith. Although it is a scathing censure, it replies to their request and allows them to make use of the spoils of war, including ransom.

The latter section of the verses is encouraging. Should the captives accept Islam, it grants them a beauteous promise. Should they think to trick the Prophet, God has no need of them.

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ أَسْرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يُثْخِنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ تُرِيدُونَ
عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦٧﴾ لَوْلَا كِتَابٌ مِنَ
اللَّهِ سَبَقَ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِيمَا أَخَذْتُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ فَكُلُوا مِمَّا غَنِمْتُمْ
حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٦٩﴾

(8:67-69) ***It is not for a prophet to take captives*** **(asrā)** ***until he subdues*** **(yuthkhina)** ***the land. You [pl.] desire the fleeting things*** **(ʿaraḍ)** ***of this world, while Allah desires the hereafter [for you], and Allah is mighty, wise. Were it not for an ordinance from Allah that had already gone forth, an awful doom would have befallen you because of what you [pl.] took. Eat then of what you have acquired in war, lawful and good*** **(ḥalālan ṭayyiban)***, and mind Allah; Allah is forgiving, merciful.*

The word *asr* means to apprehend and tie up an enemy fighter. An *asīr* is an enemy captive who is bound. Its plurals are *asrā*, *asrāʾ*, *usārā*, and *asārā*. Some also say that *asārā* is a plural of plurals (that is, it denotes groups of captives). The word *sabī* ("prisoner") is more general in usage than *asr* since it can be used for unbound captives, such as children.

Thikhan means "to conquer mercilessly".

It is used in the expressions *athkhanathu al-jirāḥ* ("the wounds overwhelmed him") and *athkhanahu al-maraḍ* ("the illness consumed him"). In *al-Mufradāt*, al-Rāghib says:

The verb *thakhuna* takes a direct object, which can then be spoken of as a *thakhīn*. It means the stoppage of the flow of a thing becuase of thickness, so it can no longer continue on. It is used in the expressions *athkhantuhu ḍarban wa istikhfāfan* ("I stopped him by beating and insulting").

God says: *It is not for a prophet to take captives until he subdues (*yuthkhina*) the land* (8:67) and *when you have overcome them (*athkhantumūhum*), then make [them] prisoners* (47:4). By "subduing the land", it means establishing his religion among the people, as if the religion is a weighty thing, which solidifies and establishes itself, succeeding something which was thin and ephemeral, feared over, trickling away, evanescing with the tide.

The word *ʿaraḍ* is used for things that come and go quickly. For that reason, it is used for the chattels of life since they soon vanish into oblivion. *Ḥalāl* is the adjective of the word *ḥill* ("untying"), which is the antonym of *ʿaqd* ("tying") and *ḥurmah* ("prohibition"). It is as if a *ḥalāl* thing had its prohibitions untied from it. *Ṭayyib* is something which is suitable to eat.

Exegetes have understood these verses in varying ways, although they concur they were revealed after the Battle of Badr to reprove the fighters and allow them to make use of the spoils of war. They disagree due to the differing narrations on why they were revealed and the varying accounts on the narrations. Even if the narrations are authentic, their careful study shows a surprising liberty in the transmission of hadith by content rather than by word, to the extent that they seem like contradictory reports.

Since understandings of the verses differ due to the varying narrations, the reproval is understood to be directed at either (a) the Prophet and all the faithful, (b) the Prophet and all the faithful, except for ʿUmar, or except for ʿUmar and Saʿd ibn Maʿādh, (c) the faithful but not the Prophet, or (d) the individual or individuals who concocted and proposed the idea of taking ransom.

Refuting a view: Some say that the verses chide them for taking ransom and the spoils of war before receiving permission from God. In this case, the Prophet would have been part and parcel of the act, since

he would have agreed to this. However, this view is incorrect since the Muslims took the ransom after the verses were revealed, not beforehand; otherwise, they would not have been censured for something they had not yet done. The Prophet is also above declaring something permissible before God had revealed it to be so. Heaven forbid that the divine, in His Truth and Exaltation, would threaten His Prophet with chastisement when he had done nothing wrong, and while He had protected him from sins, especially since divine chastisement only befalls those who commit grave sins. It is also not correct to say—as some do—that this is referring to lesser sins.

Rather, it is more apt to say that *it is not for a prophet to take captives until he subdues the land* is an axiom that the previous prophets adhered to. Whenever they fought and conquered their enemies, they killed them, so it would ward off others, and get them to cease and desist from threatening God and His Messenger. They would only take prisoners after they had firm control of the land and their religions had taken root among the people. By that time, there would be no reason not to take prisoners—either for ransom, or whom they could release graciously. This is what God revealed to the Prophet after Islam had established a firm foothold in the Ḥijaz and Yemen:

> *So when you meet in battle those who disbelieve, then smite the necks until when you have overcome them, then make [them] prisoners, and afterwards either set them free as a favor or let them ransom [themselves]….* (47:4)

The context of the verse leads to the conclusion that the reproval, in the first verse, is for taking captives. This is bolstered by *an awful doom would have befallen you because of what you [pl.] took*, in the second verse. That is, an awful doom would have befallen them for taking prisoners. When the verse was revealed, they had already taken prisoners but had not yet ransomed them. Therefore, they were not being reproved for taking ransom, as some have proffered.

This is also bolstered by verse 8:69, which commences with the conjunction *fa-* denoting a shift branching off from the previous verse. This verse allows taking the spoils of war, which includes ransom. It indicates that they had suggested to the Prophet that, instead of killing the prisoners,

they ransom them, just like, in the verse at the beginning of the *sūrah*, they had asked him to give them the spoils of war (*anfāl*). How could one imagine that they asked him for the spoils of war but not ransom, especially since—according to narrations—nearly 280,000 dirhams of ransom money had already been taken?

They had asked the Prophet to give them the spoils of war, and to collect ransom and give it to them. Therefore, God censures them at the outset for taking captives; then He allows them to exchange them for ransom. However, the Prophet was not among those being censured in the verse: he did not decide, on his own, that they had permission to take the prisoners for ransom, or take part in what they were doing.

Textual evidence for this from the verse is as follows. The Prophet was not one of the people being reproved in the verse, since the verse is chiding them for taking captives, and there is no evidence in it that he spoke with them about this or was happy with it. Nothing in the narrations says that he advised them to take captives or suggests that he was at all pleased with it. Rather, it was part of the customs of war among the Migrants and the Helpers: when they vanquished their enemy, they would take the survivors as prisoners so they could enslave them or ransom them. In narrations, it is related that used to vie with each other to take captives and that each man would guard his own captive, so that no one would do anything to him—apart from ʿAlī, who felled many men and did not take any captives.

It is not for a prophet—it has not been the way of God with His prophets. *To take captives*—for it to be suitable for him to capture them and extract something from that. *Until he subdues*—has a firm grasp over—*the land*—and his religion has been established among the people. *You desire*— you, O fighters at Badr! This address is in the plural because the reprimand is directed at everyone, since most them had put forward this idea to the Prophet—*the fleeting things of this world*—its quickly vanishing goods—*while Allah desires the hereafter*—establishing the dictates of religion and commanding battle against the faithless. Regarding this way of doing things (*sunnah*) which they are informed of in his verse, *Allah is mighty*—never overpowered—*wise*; He does not err in his perfect rulings.

Were it not for an ordinance from Allah that had already gone for: God shall not rain down punishment on them or obliterate them. Still, the

expression is left vague since this makes for a sharper reprimand: it leads the listener's mind in any possible way, and keeps them from making light of the divine command by limiting it to a specific circumstance. *An awful doom*—This indicates the enormity of transgression, since divine chastisement only befalls those who commit mortal sins. *Would have befallen you because of what you took*—The captives you took, since the spoils of war and ransom money had not yet been collected before the revelation of these verses, which pronounce them lawful and wholesome. *Eat then of what you have acquired in war*—spend whatever you have earned during wartime, whether it be taken from the property of the idolaters or taken as ransom. *Lawful and good*—since it is lawful and wholesome, permitted by God. *And mind Allah; Allah is forgiving, merciful*—this either elaborates on *Eat then of what you have acquired in war…*, or it elaborates on all that came before it. In the first case, it would mean: "We have forgiven you and had mercy upon you, so spend the war-booty." In the second case, it would mean, "God shall not punish you. Rather, He has permitted this, for He is forgiving, merciful."

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِمَنْ فِي أَيْدِيكُمْ مِنَ الْأَسْرَىٰ إِنْ يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ خَيْرًا يُؤْتِكُمْ خَيْرًا مِمَّا أُخِذَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٧٠﴾

(8:70) ***O Prophet! Tell the captives who are in your hands, "If Allah knows any good in your hearts, He will give you better than what was taken from you, and forgive you; Allah is forgiving, merciful."***

Since the captives are described as being "in their hands", this indicates that they had been wholly defeated, just as, when a person holds a thing in his hand, he can turn it whichever way he wishes.

"If Allah knows any good in your hearts: This is a figure of speech denoting faith, or following the truth, which goes hand in hand with faith. For God promises them forgiveness at the end of the verse, and polytheism and forgiveness do not go together. God says: *Allah does not forgive that someone should associate something with Him, but He forgives whatever He wills, apart from that…* (4:48).

The verse means: "O Prophet! Tell those captives who are in your hands whom you have control over and have taken ransom for: 'If faith establishes itself firmly in your hearts—and God knows best whether it has taken root and actualized—God will give you something better than the ransom that has been taken from you. He will forgive you; God is forgiving, merciful.'"

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وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا خِيَانَتَكَ فَقَدْ خَانُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَأَمْكَنَ مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٧١﴾

(8:71) ***And if they intend to betray you, they have betrayed Allah before, but Allah gave you power over them*** **(amkana minhum).** ***Allah is knowing, wise.***

Amkana minhum means to be given power over them. God first says *betray you* because they had been planning to ransom themselves in order to round up a second alliance and attack the Prophet. Then, *they have betrayed Allah before* refers to their denial [of Islam, of monotheism], their insistence on extinguishing the light of God, and their plots and schemes.

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The verse means: "If they believe in God, and faith establishes itself firmly in their hearts, God will grant them something better than what was taken from them: He will forgive them. And if they intend to betray you and return to what they were doing—obduracy and wickedness—then [know that] they have previously betrayed God. Therefore, God gave you power over them now, and He is able to give you power over them again. God knows their treachery, should they betray you, and is wise in giving you power over them.

Examining Narrations

(1) Regarding *It is not for a prophet to take captives…* (8:67), *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* says:

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At the Battle of Badr, seventy of the polytheists fell. ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib killed twenty-seven of them, and there were seventy prisoners of war. None of the Prophet's companions were taken prisoner. So they rounded up the prisoners, roped them together, and marched them on foot.

Nine of the Prophet's companions were killed, including Saʿd ibn Khaythamah, who was one of the chiefs of the Aws tribe.

Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq says that at the Battle of Badr, eleven Muslims were martyred—four of the Quraysh, and seven of the Helpers. Some also say eight, and that forty-odd of the polytheists were killed.

It is related from Ibn ʿAbbās: "When evening fell at Badr, and the captives were bound, the Prophet remained awake for the first part of the night. His companions asked him, 'Why don't you sleep?' He said, 'I have heard the wailing of my uncle ʿAbbās in his bonds.' So they untied him, and he settled down. Then, the Prophet slept."

It is related from ʿUbaydah al-Salmānī: "At the Battle of Badr, the Messenger of God told his companions regarding the captives, 'If you want, you can kill them; and if you want, you can exchange them for ransom, but the same number of men that you keep as captives will be martyred from you.' They had seventy captives.

"They said, 'No, we will exchange them for ransom, so that we can get something out of this and fortify ourselves against our enemy; let the same number of men on our side be martyred.'"

ʿUbaydah al-Salmānī continued: "They sought the best of both worlds. [As the Prophet predicted] seventy on their side were killed at the Battle of Uḥud."

The book of ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm says: "When the Messenger of God [gave the command to] kill al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith and ʿUqbah ibn Abī Muʿayyiṭ, the Helpers feared that he would execute the prisoners. They said, 'O Messenger of God! We have slain seventy—while they are your kinsfolk and relatives. Are you trying to eradicate that line? O Messenger of God, ransom them instead!' They asked that after they had already taken whatever loot they could find from the camp of the Quraysh.

"After they made that request, the verses were revealed: *It is not for a prophet to take captives…* (8:67). Thus, they were allowed [to take captives]. The largest amount of ransom was forty thousand dirhams, and the smallest amount of ransom was one thousand

dirhams.

"The members of the Quraysh pooled whatever ransom money they could, less or more, in accordance with their circumstances. One of the Quraysh who did so was Zaynab, the daughter of the Messenger of God, in order to secure the release of her husband, al-ʿĀṣ ibn al-Rabīʿ. She sent some of her necklaces, which Khadījah had outfitted her with as part of her bridal trousseau; Abū al-ʿĀṣ was the son of Khadījah's sister.

"When the Messenger of God saw the necklaces, he said, 'May God have mercy upon Khadījah. She gave her these necklaces for her wedding.' Then the Messenger of God freed him on the condition that he send Zaynab to him, and that no one should impede her. He promised that and kept his promise."

It is narrated: "The Prophet abhorred taking ransom. When Saʿd ibn Maʿādh saw the dislike in his face, he said, 'O Messenger of God, this is the first battle we have faced a contingent of polytheists in. Dealing them a harsh blow is better than letting them live.'

"ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said, 'O Messenger of God, they have lied to you and expelled you, so bring them and strike their necks. Put ʿAlī in charge of ʿAqīl and have him strike his neck, and put me in charge of so-and-so, and I will strike his neck, for these are the leaders of faithlessness.'

"Abū Bakr said, 'These are your kinsfolk and relatives. Trust them and let them live, and exchange them for ransom instead, so we can gain some strength against the rejectors (*kuffār*).'

"Ibn Zayd said that the Messenger of God said, 'Were God to rain down chastisement from the heavens, none of you would be saved, apart from ʿUmar and Saʿd ibn Maʿādh.'"

Abū Jāʿfar [Imām] al-Bāqir said, "At the Battle of Badr, each of the polytheists was ransomed for forty *ūqiyah*,[1] and each *ūqiyah* equalled forty *mithqāl* [a tiny weight].

"This was except for al-ʿAbbās; he was ransomed for one hundred *ūqiyah*. Furthermore, when he was captured, twenty *ūqiyah* of

1 A measure similar to an ounce. Cf. Latin *uncia*. [Trans.]

gold were taken from him. The Prophet had said, 'These are part of the spoils of war, so you have to pay for the release of yourself and the two sons of your brother, Nawfal and ʿAqīl.'
"He [al-ʿAbbās] replied, 'I have nothing.'
"He [the Prophet] asked, 'What about the gold you entrusted with Um al-Faḍl and told her, "If anything happens to me, this is for you, al-Faḍl, ʿAbd Allāh, and Qutham"?'
"He [al-ʿAbbās] said, 'Who told you about that?'
"He [the Prophet] said, 'God.'
"He [al-ʿAbbās] said, 'I bear witness that you are the Messenger of God and that no one knew about this but God.'"

Author's comments: There are many Sunni and Shiʿi narrations of a similar meaning. We have abstained from mentioning them all here for the sake of brevity.

(2) In *Qurb al-Isnād*, by al-Ḥimyārī, it is related from ʿAbd Allāh ibn Maymūn from Imām al-Ṣādiq that his father [Imām al-Bāqir] said:
When the Prophet was given some wealth in dirhams, he told al-ʿAbbās, "O ʿAbbās, spread out a robe and take some of this money." So he spread out a robe and took a portion of it. Then the Messenger of God said, "O ʿAbbās, this is part of what God—the blessed and exalted—declared in: *O Prophet! Tell the captives who are in your hands, "If Allah knows any good in your hearts, He will give you better than what was taken from you, and forgive you; Allah is forgiving, merciful"* (8:70). This verse was revealed about al-ʿAbbās, Nawfal, and ʿAqīl.
At the Battle of Badr, the Messenger of God forbade them to kill any of the Banū Hāshim or Abū al-Bakhtārī. Therefore, they took them prisoner and sent ʿAlī [to the captives].
He [ʿAlī] asked, "Who here is from the Banū Hāshim?" He walked by [his brother] ʿAqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib, but turned away from him. ʿAqīl called him and said, "O son of my mother, ʿAlī, by God, you have seen where I stand."
Then he went back to the Messenger of God and told him, "Abū

al-Faḍl is in the hands of so-and-so, ʿAqīl is in the hands of so-and-so, and Nawfal is in the hands of so-and-so"—meaning Nawfal ibn al-Ḥārith.

When the Messenger of God came to ʿAqīl, he said, "O Abū Yazīd, Abū Jahl has been slain!"

He [ʿAqīl] replied, "Fine, then you should have no more quarrel with the province."

He [the Prophet] said, "Either destroy them, or ride on their shoulders [a figure of speech meaning 'pay or die']."

Al-ʿAbbās was brought and was told, "Ransom yourself and the son [alt. two sons] of your brother."

He said, "O Muḥammad! Let me ask the Quraysh for the money."

The Prophet told him, "Pay it from what you left with Um al-Faḍl when you told her, 'If anything happens to me, use this money for your children and yourself.'"

He [al-ʿAbbās] said, "O son of my brother, who told you that?"

He said, "[The angel] Gabriel."

He [al-ʿAbbās] said, "I swear, no one but me knew that. I bear witness that you are the Messenger of God."

All of the captives returned as polytheists except for al-ʿAbbās, ʿAqīl, and Nawfil ibn al-Ḥārith. About them, the verse was revealed: *Tell the captives who are in your hands…* (8:70).

Author's comments: Something similar is related in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, through varying chains, from the companions. Ibn Saʿd and Ibn ʿAsākir also relate from Ibn ʿAbbās that the verse was revealed about al-ʿAbbās and the two sons of his brother. The amount of the ransom for each of the captives and the story of the ransom of al-ʿAbbās and the two sons of his brother is related by al-Ṭabrisī in *Majmaʿ al-Bayān* from Imām al-Bāqir, as in the narration.

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Verses 72 to 75

These verses wrap up the chapter. They refer to some of what was said at the outset of the chapter. They affirm the ties of loyalty between the faithful—apart from those who declined to migrate—and sever ties of loyalty with the faithless.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آوَوْا وَنَصَرُوا أُولَٰئِكَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يُهَاجِرُوا مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ وَلَايَتِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجِرُوا ۚ وَإِنِ اسْتَنْصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٧٢﴾

(8:72) ***Those who believed and migrated and strove with their wealth and their selves in the way of Allah, and those who gave shelter and aid are guardians of each other. Those who believed but did not migrate are not under your guardianship in any way until they migrate. If they ask you for help for the sake of religion, you must help them unless it is against a people whom you have a treaty with. Allah sees what you do.***

Those who believed and migrated refers to the first group of the Migrants, who left before the revelation of this chapter, as indicated by what is mentioned in the last verse. *Those who gave shelter and aid* refers to the Helpers, who sheltered the Prophet and the faithful who migrated, and aided God and His Messenger. In those days, those two groups comprised all the Muslims, apart from a handful who accepted Islam in Mecca but had not migrated.

God placed loyalty between them by saying: *[they] are guardians of each other (*awliyāʾ*)*. *Wilāyah* ("alliance", "guardianship", "loyalty") as used here is more expansive than *wilāyah* in the sense of authority over matters of inheritance, mutual aid pacts, or non-aggression pacts. Here, it means

that if just one Muslim gave a pledge of security to a single member of the faithless, all the Muslims would have to respect that. Therefore, all Muslims share authority and guardianship over each other: a single Migrant or a single Helper could do this on behalf of all the Migrants and Helpers. This is evinced by the fact that the statement about guardianship in the verse is unconditional.

Refuting a view: There is no evidence in the verse to suggest that the verse is speaking about the decree that the Prophet passed at the outset of the migration. At that time, he made pacts of brotherhood between the Migrants and the Helpers and declared that they would inherit from each other; this continued for a time, until that decree was rescinded.

Those who believed but did not migrate are not under your guardianship in any way until they migrate. If they ask you for help for the sake of religion, you must help them unless it is against a people whom you have a treaty with. Allah sees what you do: The meaning of this is clear: the faithful who did not migrate are not under the formal protection of the Migrants or the Helpers. However, if they ask for aid for the sake of religion, then that aid must be given, unless it involves violating a pact made between the Muslims and a group of the non-believers.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ إِلَّا تَفْعَلُوهُ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿٧٣﴾

(8:73) ***The faithless are guardians of each other. If you do not do this, chaos and great corruption shall spread throughout the land.***

Meaning, the faithless look after each other, and do not extend this protection to the faithful. Therefore, the faithful may not take them as allies, since God says that they *are guardians of each other*. This is a legislation and command expressed in the form of a declarative sentence. Legislating loyalty between the faithless may not have any other meaning except that their allegiance do not extend to the faithful. Therefore, the faithful must not take them as allies.

If you do not do this, chaos and great corruption shall spread throughout the land: This explains the wisdom behind assigning loyalties in this way. Every human society must have some sort of system of alliances

with other societies. This is particularly important for the Islamic society, which is founded upon following the truth and spreading divine justice. On the other hand, alliances with the faithless (*kuffār*), who are the enemies of such a society, leads to intermixing between them and Muslims, causing their beliefs and customs to leak into their society, spoiling the clear Islamic path towards the truth through their clear march towards vain desires and servitude towards Satan. Historical events from that time testify to what is referred to in this verse.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آوَوْا وَنَصَرُوا أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا ۚ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٧٤﴾

(8:74) ***Those who believed and migrated and strove in Allah's way, and those who gave shelter and aid are the true faithful. They have forgiveness and a generous sustenance.***

These are the effects of true faith. A person who exhibits these effects can be described as a true believer. It promises those who have this type of faith forgiveness and a generous sustenance.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ بَعْدُ وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا مَعَكُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مِنْكُمْ ۚ وَأُولُو الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٥﴾

(8:75) ***Those who believed afterwards, and migrated and strove with you are one of you. Blood relatives have a greater claim on each other in the Book of Allah. Allah knows all things.***

This addresses the first group of Migrants and the Helpers, and extends to anyone who believed, then migrated, then strove with them; all of them are guardians of each other.

Blood relatives have a greater claim on each other in the Book of Allah. Allah knows all things: This sentence places authority (*wilāyah*)[1] between

1 *Wilāyah*, as a technical term, can refer to various forms of authority, such as governorship and legal representation. In this set of verses, it is used first in a sociopolitical manner, and here to refer to legal authority over inheritance.

kinsfolk with respect to inheritance, even though other aspects of mutual guardianship (*wilāyah*) are not limited to kinsfolk.

This verse (8:75) abrogates the decree about inheritance that the Prophet made at the outset of the Migration. [That is, that those Migrants and Helpers who took a pact of brotherhood at the hand of the Prophet would inherit from each other.] It establishes that blood relatives inherit from each other, whether they are specifically named as inheritors (as part of the *sahm*) or are paternal relatives (ʿ*aṣabah*), or not. The decree in the verse is absolute, as is apparent.

Examining Narrations

(1) In *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, it is related from [Imām] al-Bāqir:
Those who had taken a pact of brotherhood used to inherit from each other.

Author's comments: However, this narration does not prove that this verse was revealed about the pact of brotherhood.

(2) In *al-Kāfī*, via a chain of narration from Abū Baṣīr, it is related that Abū Jaʿfar [Imām al-Bāqir] said:
Maternal uncles and aunts inherit if there is no one else. God says: *Blood relatives have a greater claim on each other in the Book of Allah* (8:75).

Author's comments: Al-ʿAyyāshi relates this from Abū Baṣīr from him [Imām al-Bāqir], without a chain of narration.

(3) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is related from Zurārah that Abū Jaʿfar [Imām al-Bāqir] said regarding *Blood relatives have a greater claim on each other in the Book of Allah* (8:75):
Some relatives have a greater right to inheritance than others, since they are closer to the deceased.
The nearest to the deceased are his mother, his half-brother and sister from the mother's side, and his father. They are the closest to him. Is not the mother closer to the deceased than his brothers

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ʿAllāmah is distinguishing between these types of authority denoted by the same word. [Trans.]

and sisters?[1]

(4) In *Tafsīr al-ʿAyyāshī*, it is related from Ibn Sinān that Abū ʿAbd Allāh [Imām al-Ṣādiq] said:
When ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and ʿUthman ibn ʿAffān disagreed over a man who had died and did not have any relatives who were part of the group who were allocated inheritance, but who had other kinsfolk who were not meant to inherit him, he [ʿUthmān] said, "They do not have any consideration in this matter."
ʿAlī replied, "The inheritance goes to his kinsfolk, since God said: *Blood relatives have a greater claim on each other in the Book of Allah* (8:75)."
ʿUthmān said, "I will put the inheritance into the Muslim treasury, and none of his kinsfolk will inherit from him."

Author's comments: There are many Shiʿi narrations recanting the idea [found in Sunni *fiqh*] that when the inheritance is bigger than the shares, the remnant goes to the male relatives from the father's side, and which cite this verse as evidence.

(5) In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is related from al-Ṭayālisī, al-Ṭabarānī, Abū al-Shaykh, and Ibn Mardawayh that Ibn ʿAbbās said:
The Messenger of God made brothers of his companions and had them inherit from each other, until this verse was revealed: *Blood relatives have a greater claim on each other in the Book of Allah* (8:75). Then, they stopped doing that and inherited in accordance with kin ties.

(6) In *Maʿānī al-Akhbār*,[2] via an incomplete chain of narration, it is related from Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar [Imām al-Kāẓim] regarding what transpired between himself and Hārūn [al-Rashīd]:

1 The nearest to the deceased are his mother, his half brother and sister from the mother side, and his father. The nearest to the deceased are his mother, and his full brother and sister. [Ed.]

2 The translator did not find this narration in *Maʿānī al-Akhbār*, but it is present in *ʿUyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā* which is by the same compiler. [Trans.]